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ABSTRACT

The administration and funding of early childhood education programs has been the focus of recent policy debates. This volume is the second report of three, which are derived from a study that examined how local organizations implement complex government programs for early childhood education. The study analyzed and documented significant local examples of innovative and successful reforms in early childhood services. This volume contains seven narrative case studies of local early childhood initiatives, including Head Start grantees, local school districts, and child-care agencies. The case studies provide detailed descriptions of the community context, service strategies, organizational and fiscal attributes, and outcomes of each initiative. All projects serve children from birth to 5 years of age who are from families of low to moderate incomes; involve sponsorship by one or more state or federal programs; and include a significant component of outreach, involvement, and service to parents and other family members. The seven sites include: (1) Child Development, Inc. (Russellville, Arkansas); (2) Inn Circle, Inc. (Cedar Rapids, Iowa); (3) Sheltering Arms, Inc. (Atlanta, Georgia); (4) "The Parent Services Project (Fairfax, California); (5) James E. Biggs Early Childhood Center (Covington, Kentucky); (6) Jersey City, New Jersey Early Childhood Program; and (7) Family and Child Education (FACE) (Canoncito and Torreon, New Mexico). (LMI)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD REFORM IN SEVEN COMMUNITIES:

FRONT-LINE PRACTICE, AGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY

By

Tom Schultz, National Association of State Boards of Education
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Volume II
Case Studies

June 30, 1995

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PREFACE

The Studies of Education Reform project was initiated by the Office of Education Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, to examine the implementation and effects of twelve significant education reform strategies, including student assessment, parent community involvement, uses of technology, and early childhood services. Twelve research projects were funded to analyze local examples of successful implementation of reforms, to inform practitioner and policy audiences. This research on early childhood reforms was conducted by the National Association of State Boards of Education and the Harvard Family Research Project.

The project design involved analysis of past research and recent policy trends and the preparation of seven case studies of local early childhood initiatives. To reflect the diversity of providers of programs for young children and their families, case study sites included Head Start grantees, local school districts, and child care agencies. All projects serve children from low- to moderate-income, ages birth through age five; involve sponsorship by one or more state or federal programs; and include a significant component of outreach, involvement, and service to parents and other family members.

The case studies in this report are based on observations of program services in classrooms and home settings; extensive interviews with agency managers and staff members; analysis of reports, proposals and other documents; and focus groups with parents. Draft versions of each case study were reviewed for accuracy by leadership from each program site.

Each case study includes description and analysis of program services and organizational strategies. Information is included on the origins and evolution of the program, the context of family and community needs, strategies for serving children and parents, the organization's governance, and features of financing, staffing and program management.

Two additional volumes provide additional information on this project. Volume I, the Technical Research Report includes a synthesis of research on early childhood services; a description of the research strategy and questions; a cross-case analysis of strategies for supporting child development, serving and involving families, fiscal and program management, and observations about how state and federal policies influence the work of these seven local agencies. This report also describes evaluation strategies and data on outcomes from the case study sites; provides an analysis of the fiscal, managerial, and staff resources necessary to implement high quality early childhood programs; and analyzes the implications of this research for efforts to improve public policy and local program practices for young children and families. Volume III describes our research design and methods, including our strategy for selecting case study sites and copies of interview guides used in our field work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study of how local organizations implement complex government programs was itself a complicated interorganizational initiative. The National Association of State Boards of Education, the Harvard Family Research Project, the U.S. Department of Education, Anne Mitchell (an independent consultant of early childhood policy issues), a panel of technical advisors, a set of authors of commissioned papers, and busy managers and staff members in seven local early childhood agencies all made substantial investments of resources and talents to this project.

The authors are grateful to our Project Officers, Bob Thomas and Carol Chelemer, and staff at the Office of Education Research and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education for conceptualizing and sponsoring this research, for their management acumen, and for substantive advice on our plans, methods, reports, and products.

We are also grateful to members of our Advisory Group, Charles Bruner, Lois Engstrom, Sarah Greene, Norton Grubb, Jim Hamilton, Vonnie McLoyd, Roger Neugebauer, Sheila Smith, and Brenda Turnbull who provided valuable advice on the research design, site selection strategy, and the evolving context of early childhood policy and practice.

The study could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of our seven case study sites. Directors, staff members, parents, and children were unfailingly gracious in working with us during our interviewing, focus groups, and observation of classrooms, meetings, home visits, and other project activities. Thanks to Ethel Seiderman and the late Barbara Shaw of the Parent Services Project; Jo Ann Williams at Child Development, Inc.; Diane "Rocky" Rocketenetz and Rick Hulefeld in Covington, Kentucky; Pat Noonan and Pat Bryant in Jersey City, New Jersey; Chris Carman at Inn Circle in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Elaine Draeger at Sheltering Arms, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia; and Susan Neddeau, Colleen Alivado, and Patsy Jones of the FACE Program.

Heather Weiss, Director of the Harvard Family Research Project helped to conceptualize the research design, provided strategic guidance on the worlds of public policy and family support initiatives, and contributed in many ways to the shape and quality of our final products. Other members of the Harvard Family Research Project staff also contributed research and editorial support, in particular Tamara Beauboeuf, Crystal Byndloss, Margaret Dowley, Arlie Woodrum.

A number of people at the National Association of State Boards of Education were of assistance over the course of this project, including Gene Wilhoit and Brenda Welburn, Executive Directors; Virginia Roach, Deputy Director; David Kysilko, Director of Publications; Adele Robinson, Director of Governmental Affairs; and Joan Waters and Nancy Deoudes, Support Staff.

While our field work and analysis have been collective efforts, Tom Schultz was the primary author of the case studies on Child Development, Inc., Sheltering Arms, Inc., and the Parent Services Project. Elena Lopez wrote the accounts of the James E. Biggs Early Childhood Center and Family and Child Education; and Mona Hochberg was responsible for preparation of the Inn Circle, Inc. and Jersey City, N.J. case studies.

Finally, we offer our appreciation to two colleagues who made indispensable contributions to this volume: Kate Oudekirk of the Harvard Family Research Project, who painstakingly transcribed tape recordings of our interviews and focus groups; and Kate Wrean of Work Net, Inc. who edited the case studies.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT, INC. - RUSSELLVILLE, AR.

"Expanding Head Start to Serve Arkansas Families"

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Executive Director	Jo Ann Williams
Year Opened	1986
Number of Children Served	2,300
1994 Budget	$6.1 million
Primary Funding Sources	Head Start, Child Care Vouchers, Parent Fees, Dept. of Education, Private Businesses & Foundations

POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- CDI is a Head Start program that has been expanded and diversified to serve a wide range families with young children in 11 rural counties in Arkansas. CDI sponsors home-based, center-based, and family day care services for children from birth to school age. CDI centers provide full-day, full-year programs for children whose parents work or attend school. Though the majority of families served by CDI are low-income, more affluent parents may enroll their children and pay for services on a sliding fee scale.

- CDI draws on more than fifteen state, federal, and private sector funding sources to support more than 300 staff members working at 19 centers, 9 family day care homes, and in varied forms of home-based services. Creative fundraising and sophisticated fiscal management has resulted in a four-fold growth in the agency's budget over the last seven years. However, in spite of this rate of expansion, the majority of CDI programs have substantial waiting lists of eligible families.

- CDI contends with several management challenges, beginning with organizing to comply with the disparate standards and requirements of funding sources with differing eligibility criteria, staffing requirements and standards for program quality. Moreover, CDI strives to use these resources to create a coherent continuum of services, rather than a series of separate, categorical projects. CDI aims for staff, parents, and children to feel they belong to a common CDI enterprise, rather than identify themselves with one specific definition of need or category of service. Finally, CDI struggles to assure consistency and high quality across its large, dispersed set of program sites, through a blend of program supervision, staff development, site-based management and an agency-wide procedures manual.

INTRODUCTION

Child Development, Inc. (CDI) illustrates how Head Start can be expanded to serve entire families and communities. It defies the stereotype of Head Start as a single function, part-day preschool operation which only serves poor children. CDI operates a host of different programs and services, including child care programs for children of all ages and from every level of family income. CDI has garnered resources from foundations, economic development, United Way, and corporate entities as well as a wide range of state and federal agencies. A truly innovative agency run by an entrepreneurial leader, CDI serves over 2,000 children in 11 counties in southwest Arkansas; it has 19 centers, nine family day care homes, and a staff of more than 40 who deliver services through home visits. Over the last seven years, CDI's budget has grown from roughly $1.5 million to over $6.1 million, from a core of Head Start funding to over 15 different public and private sources of support.

CDI exemplifies the cutting edge of innovation within Project Head Start, the nation's largest and best-known federally funded early childhood program. As embodied in the recent Advisory Committee on Head Start Improvement and Expansion report, the future for Head Start involves expansion from a dominant pattern of part-day services for four-year-olds to a "total family" system: that is, providing more full-day, full-year services for families who are either employed or in school or training and offering support to infants and toddlers as well as three- and four-year-olds. The CDI agency offers a picture of how this more comprehensive and inclusive version of Head Start works in a sizeable region of rural Arkansas. By savvy, relentless fundraising, CDI has attracted a wide range of public and private sources of support, and broadened the scope of its services along several dimensions:

- **Serving more children and families.** While Head Start funds support services to 891 of the children CDI services, the agency has been able to enroll more than 1,100 additional children through its success in obtaining other sources of funding.

- **Serving children from a wide range of family incomes.** While Head Start funds may only be used to serve children from low income families (below $14,800 for a family of four), CDI's participation in the state's child care voucher program and its own fee-based child care services allow other families to enroll children if vacancies are available.

- **Serving children from infancy through the elementary school years.** Through its non-Head Start-based resources, CDI can offer child care services to infants, toddlers, and school-aged children.

- **Serving families with a variety of needs and circumstances.** CDI offers home-based services to parents who live in remote rural areas, lack transportation, or prefer not to send their child to a classroom setting. Its centers are open for as much as 19 hours per day to provide child care for families who work on different shifts or attend school. Through an Even Start grant, CDI provides adult literacy and education to parents, along with an early childhood intervention component. The agency also has special initiatives in place to serve teen parents, families with young children with disabilities, and participants in Arkansas's welfare reform program.

This case study begins by discussing CDI's origins, the policy context in which it was developed, and family and community needs. Then we describe the program's services, which include recruitment, classroom- and home-based early childhood activities, parent involvement opportunities, and linking families to other community agencies. We also look at CDI's relationship with local school districts and participant opinions of the program. In the section on organizational strategy, we focus on CDI's program governance and management strategies. These, along with staffing, training, and funding, are areas crucial to CDI's success. We conclude by examining what makes CDI distinct and defining the agency's implementation challenges.

Program Inception and Policy Context

The evolution of CDI begins with Executive Director Jo Ann Williams. Trained in home economics, she was hired in 1965 by leaders of the then-new ARVAC antipoverty agency to create a child care center for low income families and a "home management program" to teach parenting skills. In 1968, Williams became the Head Start director for ARVAC and led a gradual pattern of program expansion and diversification:

> "I created the Child Development Division of ARVAC, beginning with Head Start, adding a Home Start demonstration program in the early 1970s and then a family day care home initiative funded with Title XX social services funds. In 1975 we were funded as a national training site to spread the Home Start option and also became a training center on health service issues for the Southwest region of the country. We also gained resources through the Department of Agriculture for a nutrition program. Later on we picked up two counties in the southern part of the state when Head Start expansion funds became available. A major change came about in 1986 when we spun off from ARVAC to become an independent non-profit corporation."

CDI used its stable core of Head Start funding to build capability and a positive reputation in both center-based and home-based forms of service. Head Start grantees are generally eligible to receive continued funding without being subject to competition from other contending agencies in their region. The Head Start system also includes a detailed set of performance standards which support high quality in local programs, as well as substantial support for grantees in terms of program monitoring, technical assistance, an active network of peer agencies and professionals, and funding for staff development. As it grew up within this system, CDI became well-positioned to take advantage of other public early childhood funding from state and federal agencies.

Williams's accounts of program development efforts portray an agency which matches up emerging family needs with new sources of public funding:

> "We saw needs which we couldn't meet within our Head Start program and then looked for new sources of funding... it seemed natural. For example, in seeking to provide more help to teen parents we first developed an initiative through vocational education funding. Then this experience pushed us to provide child care for younger children within the same school buildings. We moved into our home-based literacy effort because Head Start families had no transportation or child care to allow them to participate in literacy classes offered through adult education."

CDI has flourished within a favorable "market" for expansion of early childhood services as well. State political leaders, notably former Governor Bill Clinton, were successful in passing the new Arkansas Better Chance early childhood legislation. New federal programs, such as Even Start and the Child Development Block Grant program, have come on line to provide new forms of funding for early childhood services. Economic development in Arkansas, too, is bringing new employers to rural counties and creating an expanded need for child care services. These corporations become a source of contributions for CDI facilities and functions and added tax revenue for public services; their employees are frequently clients for CDI's fee-based child care programs. Indeed, the agency has tripled in size in six years, and still finds long waiting lists for its centers in many communities. The Russellville center, for example, enrolls 109 children and has over 200 families on its waiting list.

Family and Community Needs

CDI's current long-term plan and annual report include detailed county-by-county data on rates of unemployment, divorce, low birth-weight babies, births to teen moms, and other population statistics. For example, of 905 Head Start families, 57 percent are one-parent families, average family income was $8,431, 27 percent participate in Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and 53 percent in Medicaid. CDI's family needs assessment data also show that over one-third of current parents have not yet earned a high school diploma.

Staff members also provide insights on the needs of children and families served by CDI:

> "We're seeing kids who've been exposed to drugs at home, using profanity as a second language, too much sexual knowledge -- parents who aren't parenting. They can't express themselves verbally so they get physical. I have three boys who were role playing being drug dealers and slapping each other around."
>
> "We find some substance abuse (mostly alcohol), some sexual and physical abuse, emotional issues, marital problems. Poor self-esteem in moms who feel trapped at home. In kids, the biggest thing is controlling impulsiveness and aggression. Teachers are seeing much more aggression from the kids than they used to -- language, spitting, kicking, biting."

Many see a clear link between family needs and the ability of young children to grow and learn:

> "People need the basics: warmth, housing, clothing, utilities. It's hard to be motivated to learn without these things. In our area, transportation costs are a big problem. One mom rides ten blocks on a bike with her son to get him to the center. People can't meet their dental and medical expenses or they don't have adequate clothing to make it through the year. There are parents you will never see at school functions because they're afraid to talk to teachers."
>
> "What do parents need? For some the needs are astronomical. I had a small grant for a person to do home visits and we uncovered a lot. Just getting kids to medical services is a problem. Usually they have only one vehicle and the father takes it to work. Kids without clothes don't come to school either. Other kids are living with the grandparents, due to marital problems at home."

Parents and staff also note the importance of responsiveness of agencies and professionals:

> "Dental and health checkups are real important, but I can't afford to pay. You can sit all day in the health center. If you say you're from Head Start, you get served; otherwise, you can just pack your lunch and get ready to wait. So you'll wait until they almost have pneumonia before you bring them in, and so your kids are half-sick all the time. They're crabby and tired and they make other kids get sick too."

> "I know what it's like to not have much money and not have the right name in a small community. There's always someone around to tell you what you can't do. I've heard kindergarten teachers downgrade and label parents behind their back. There are so many kids who are labelled and held back in kindergarten."

Also apparent in the community is the connection between employment and family life. The good news is that poultry processing and manufacturing corporations are moving to this area. However, observers note a variety of stresses for working parents:

> "Workers can make, with incentives, $10-12 per hour or up to $100 per day right out of high school... but it's hard work in cold, damp conditions; taking meat off the bones and portioning it. We have only 4 percent unemployment in this county. But child care is getting costly in all five of our plant sites. There must be 30 or 40 people on a waiting list for the local center. School-aged child care is another problem. Parents on the early shift start work at 6:30 a.m. and the schools don't want children outside their doors that early."

> "Almost anybody can get a job but employers aren't real forgiving. Even if you get accepted by Head Start or child care, illnesses are a huge problem. You can miss one day with a warning; if you miss two days, even to stay home with a sick child, you're gone."

> "This is a small rural site where there is lots of interest in child care, especially for second and third shift workers. The local school is across the street from our plant, so many older kids walk across the parking lot and wait in their parent's cars until the end of their shift. Many people still use kinfolk or a circle of friends, even though they aren't licensed. Employees who use the CDI center like the modern facility and the professional approach. However, at $45 per week/per child, it costs about one day's pay each week for many of our workers."

PROGRAM SERVICES

Recruitment of Families

Central office staff describe recruitment as a decentralized process in which each local center publicizes available services and reaches out to families:

> "Our staff generally know most families in the area and we get many referrals from our current and past parents. They do an overall community survey and distribute applications."

Parents add that word-of-mouth and personal relationships help promote awareness of CDI programs:

> "This is a small community; everybody knows each other. I have lots of relatives who had kids in Head Start and a sister who used to work for CDI... They all told me to make sure to get your kids in Head Start."

However parents also mention instances where eligible children aren't served because of reluctance from families:

> "My neighbor had an opportunity to send her child to Head Start but she was afraid she might get hurt or might pick up bad habits. She's very protective of her kids -- she won't send them to Scouts. She said she didn't know what kind of kids they would play with and how it would be supervised... Some parents are ashamed of their homes and uncomfortable with an outsider visiting."

Families entering the program fill out a two-page form of basic information, a form granting permission for the program to provide health screening and services, an eligibility form, and a separate form to document eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. Recruitment generally begins in February and March for Head Start and follows the following sequence:

> "We set the number of Head Start slots in each center based on our community needs assessment, and then we fill the center up to its licensed capacity with children whose families qualify for child care vouchers or who are willing to pay fees. As families apply we seek the best program to meet their needs. We give priority within Head Start to four-year-olds; we serve some threes if they have an extra need. If the family is not eligible for Head Start, we will refer them to the child care voucher program, or our third funding option, the Arkansas Better Chance program, which has the broadest eligibility criteria. After enrollment is set, we have Head Start Identification Day in July or August where we do screening, physicals, an EPSDT clinic, speech and hearing tests and a broader family needs assessment."

CDI's variety of programs and services provide options to meet the needs and circumstances and local families:

> "It's a real advantage to having both center-based and home-based programs in the same areas. If a mom in a home-based program gets a job, we try to refer her to our child care program; if a working mom chooses to leave her job when she has another child, we refer her to a home visit option; and our infant-toddler kids graduate into Head Start. When our Parent-Child Center program closed over the summer, we helped the parents get vouchers for child care if they found summer jobs. In the case of parents with infants and toddlers, if families don't qualify under Parent-Child Center guidelines, they may fit the eligibility for the teen parent program."

CDI's wide range of funding sources creates complications in the recruitment process, however, due to the differences in eligibility standards for different programs. For example, for a family of four people, Head Start income eligibility in 1993 was $14,800. Under the child care voucher sliding fee scale, a family of four pays no fee for a monthly gross income of up to $961, 20 percent of the voucher reimbursement rate for an income of up to $1,106, and the full cost of care for incomes above $1,538 per month. Under the child nutrition program, however, free meals are provided for children in a family of four members with annual incomes of up to $18,655; and reduced price meals up to incomes of $26,548. Medicaid eligibility uses a cutoff of $18,552 per year for a family of four.

Classroom- and Home-Based Early Childhood Services

CDI has classroom services in its 19 centers and nine family day care homes. Home visiting is also an integral part of the agency's service plan. Services vary slightly from center to center, though they generally include a mix of infant and toddler day care, Head Start and Even Start, developmental day care, and afterschool care.

CDI sites vary in size and quality from a small brick building in the village of Coal Hill to a large, newly-constructed center in Clarksville. The Clarksville facility was built with funding obtained through the Arkansas Industrial Development Corporation on four acres of land donated by the Sara Lee Corporation. The center is a modern one-story building divided roughly into four quadrants for classrooms for children of different ages. One room for infants holds 12 cribs, with built-in padded changing tables on top of cabinets, rocking chairs, and carpeted play areas. The center has its own kitchen and laundry. The center is open from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. using a system of teams of staff on different shifts.

The Dardanelle center has one large indoor area for three- to five-year-olds, split into two sections by a corridor of low book shelves. At the far end of the room is a stage and a piano; the two big areas are subdivided into interest centers (blocks, dramatic play, art, reading) typical of many developmental early childhood programs. On the bulletin board are examples of some of CDI's 30 different awards for exemplary aspects of center operations (e.g. Best Staff Meetings and Best Bulletin Boards). Also posted are charts to record in-kind contributions (volunteer hours, United Way funds, and travel expenses of parents who bring their children) and forms for lesson plans.

At CDI, children are grouped by age rather than by the type of funding which supports their participation. The following example shows the type of learning environment typical at CDI:

> A teacher works with eight five-year-olds on a Weekly Reader story about policemen. Looking at a picture, she asks: "What could be wrong?" (sick) "What else?" (lost) "What's the policemen doing?" (taking them home) "Right.. Who's in the background?" Later, the teacher passes out pencils and kids work on the "fun page," drawing lines to connect pictures of different types of workers with different types of vehicles. She tells them when they're finished to put their pencils on their paper and the table helper will come and collect them. Other children sprawl on the carpeting exploring a variety of books, stored in a large bathtub. Another group of nine children are making play dough with another staff member, reading a list of ingredients and measuring out each part of the recipe.

Like its classroom-based services, CDI's home-based strategies involve a similar blending of funding sources and types of services:

> "Home-base reaches a different set of folks with the same goals as the center-based programs. It's worth the money and effort because families you reach often have the most severe problems. It has a huge advantage of offering confidentiality for parents who have literacy problems. Our typical lesson plan is a mixture of classic HIPPY, health, nutrition, and adult education. Once you gain the trust of families, home visitors can get into complicated problems. We've had a father who told the mom to be out of the house by the time he returned; we've also had serious threats against our female staff from husbands."

HIPPY (the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters) was originally developed in Israel and stresses the use of parent dialogues with young children to develop language skills and knowledge of basic school readiness concepts. CDI uses materials from Arkansas's HIPPY Program as part of its home-based program. Activities include the following type of interactions:

> The teacher asks the child to trace patterns in a series of pictures which follow a narrative story, then asks which picture happened at the beginning, middle, and end of the story. The pictures are then cut out and pasted on another page in the correct order. To address basic language concepts, a teacher may engage in the following type of dialogue: "Come over to me... Stand next to me... You are next to me... I am next to you... Where are you?... Where am I?... Now stand next to the door... What is next to you?... Now stand next to the chair... What is next to you?... Now stand next to the table... What is next to you?... Tell me what I should stand next to..."
>
> Other activities include a finger play song, with each finger receiving a special name (pinky, ringer, tall man, pointer, thumbkin) and an assignment to sort plastic shapes and pick out all the letter "n's" or all the dogs. Another task is placing small shapes on objects in a large matrix board: "Put a red triangle on all the animals which are eating... all the animals which are sleeping... Take a red circle and put it wherever you want to... What did you do?"

The home visitor carries out these activities with the child for a portion of each session and then leaves materials which parents can use to continue working on each type of task.

Parent Involvement and Family Support Services

In addition to involving parents through home visiting, CDI offers services directed specifically to parents: parent and adult education; literacy and GED equivalency classes; and vocational and employment training.

Two specific initiatives, the Parent-Child Center and the Teen Parent Program have a more comprehensive two-generational focus, with eligibility and services driven by parent needs as well as child development. The Parent-Child Center grant serves 60 parents who must participate 50 percent of their time in either adult education, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) employment, vocational school, or college. These parents also work at the center half-time and receive parent training. The Teen Parent Program is funded through the Vocational and Technical Education Division of the Department of Education, serving infants and toddlers and low-income mothers who are enrolled in vocational education or adult education. Participants agree to spend at least two hours per week working as volunteers in the child care center as well as a weekly parent education session.

The Clarksville center is typical of many CDI sites in also serving parents of children in the home-based program who come into the center for periodic meetings and training sessions. It recently offered a session on home safety attended by 12 parents including two fathers. Conducted by an administrator from the local hospital, the class had a lecture/hand-out format covering issues such as the correct water temperature for the bath, careful use of electrical appliances, what to do with burns, and advice about medicines.

Linking Families with Community Agencies

CDI has built up relationships with a wide range of other education and family service agencies in its region. The shape and quality of these connections vary, due to the priorities and style of leaders, past history, and patterns of mandates and resources. With human service, health, mental health, job training, and adult education providers, relationships tend to be based on trading services and resources for a common client base:

> "We don't have enough funding to provide social workers in each center, so the teaching staff are our core group for carrying out home visits. If they encounter a high risk or complex situation we bring in a central office specialist or look for a source of local support. We do a staffing and action plan for the family and identify needed services such as counseling or substance abuse treatment. We try to limit our direct service role and rather tie them into systems which will provide ongoing support, such as community mental health centers. We may do intake work to speed up the normal process."

An initial example of interagency partnerships relates to health services. CDI is a major resource for families needing examinations or treatment for physical and dental ailments. Last year it provided 1,136 physical examinations and 881 dental examinations through a combination of in-kind donations, EPSDT and Medicaid, and direct payments from the Head Start program budget. CDI works with the various county public health agencies which provide immunizations; hearing and vision screening; well-child clinics for physical exams with referrals to doctors; training and materials for parent meetings; and training for home visitors. CDI also works with the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program for pregnant women and young children (providing eggs, cheese, milk formula, and other supplemental foods). CDI and health professionals have joined forces to solve problems, such as transportation for parents who live in remote areas, and advocate for additional resources:

> "We found kids failing school in Yell County because of head lice problems which are keeping them home. We were able to get to our state representative and get extra funds for 1,500 bottles of medication to the local health department."

Another set of CDI partnerships involves work with welfare, adult education, and job training agencies working with parents of young children. For example, Project Success, Arkansas's welfare reform strategy, targets mothers with infants who lack a GED and work experience and families who have been on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) for three to five years. Access to child care is an integral element in Project Success: participation in training cannot be mandated unless child care is available, and "transitional child care", on a sliding fee basis, must be provided for up to one year after participants go off of AFDC. CDI supports Project Success by delivering that child care component.

As a county human service administrator notes, CDI is also a helpful partner because its many programs offer ancillary supports, such as transportation:

> "CDI's accommodated us a lot. Transportation is a big problem. Parents aren't going to help a 17-year-old who dropped out of school or who is on probation to get a vehicle. Small buses have been tried in some areas but they don't go over with 17- to 21-year-olds. We have many families who live far up in the mountains; they can't avail themselves of GED offerings unless they have child care and transportation. We also refer lots of families to Head Start."

CDI works in a variety of ways with other agencies to help parents improve literacy skills, continue education, obtain employment training, and move towards economic self-sufficiency. For example, CDI's Even Start project combines adult literacy and parent education services. Another program for high school dropouts, funded by the Job Training Partnership Act, uses CDI's Parent-Child Center in Clarksville for child care and as a job placement site. An adult education supervisor comments on the success of his partnership with CDI as follows:

> "Last January we were asked to provide an adult education component for CDI's Parent-Child Center. We began with regular GED and ABE offerings last year. We're now moving to add life survival skills, parenting, using computer-assisted instructional materials and outside speakers on issues such as rape prevention, hygiene and dental care. I've worked with CETA and a variety of other programs over the years and the Parent-Child Center is as successful as any -- some girls really made a turnaround. We have lots of people who are eligible for adult education and who don't enter. Child care through the Parent-Child Center is also clearly an important attraction."

Finally, CDI staff also participate in a variety of initiatives to coordinate and simplify different public programs and funding streams which involve a common set of families and children. According to the director of the Department of Human Services,

> "We have seven different agencies doing services for families. There are so many meetings you can't keep track of them. We've gotten to the point that my entire job is nothing but meetings, community input and collaboration. A few years ago they created a county administrator position to pull client services together. We started a HELP Network, a centralized referral network, and assembled one directory of all available services. We're now trying to draft a one-page document as a single universal application for eligibility."

One notable factor in cross-agency relationships is the personal connections among professionals in this rural region. Administrators know their counterparts well due to their tenure in local systems, family and community relationships, and people moving across agencies in their careers. For example, one local principal is a former Head Start center director and also sent her granddaughter to a CDI program. In another community, the superintendent of schools notes:

> "It's helpful that the CDI center director's mother was an elementary teacher here for years so she had taught many of the parents who are now sending their kids to the center."

Relationships with Public Schools

Local public schools are linked to CDI as children and families "graduate" from CDI and move into kindergarten, through daily movement of children to and from CDI's school-aged child care operations, through a specific interagency agreement regarding serving young children with disabilities, and in a more diffuse fashion as allies, critics, and potentially competitive contenders for resources. CDI works with more than 40 local education agencies and has negotiated transition agreements with each school district in its 11 county area of service. The agreements aim to improve relationships between Head Start and public school kindergarten programs by encouraging meetings of CDI and school district teachers; the transfer of assessment data and other records on children and families to the public schools; visits by teachers to observe classroom activities across program lines; and the involvement of Head Start parents in the kindergarten program. CDI also facilitates joint training of Head Start and school district staff members.

By all accounts, the schools and CDI work cooperatively to exchange information and pave the way for a positive transition between the early childhood and kindergarten experience. School administrators are generally positive about this process:

> "The kindergarten teachers meet with the Head Start staff, we transfer records, they can use our facilities for testing and graduation. It's helpful because many parents haven't been back inside the schools since they were students and many of them don't have positive attitudes or memories. CDI's local director also comes by to pass along problems or questions she hears from parents about school issues such as test scores."
>
> "Over at the center they call this the 'big school' and we invite them over if we have an appropriate assembly. We send the school bus to pick them up which they like. We get lots of good information from them in their student folder. Usually the kindergarten teachers have no idea which kids might need specialized service, so this helps."

And CDI staff provide similarly positive views of collaboration:

> "We meet with the local kindergarten teachers each fall to talk about expectations of both programs; we exchange classroom visits during the year and hold an orientation meeting for parents in the spring."

However, other staff are concerned about the methods and climate of kindergarten programs:

> "We try to stir up the love of learning in children and hopefully it transfers. But I've seen some kids who are turned off to learning in kindergarten by a teacher. Most kindergartens have the same kind of interest centers we do, but in other schools it's, 'Sit in your assigned seats and do your work!' With Head Start, you learn to get with the children, to use things they are used to at home for learning. I think some of the kindergarten teachers are too distant, though I admit they can't do one-on-one work as much because of their class sizes. On home visits, we hear from parents that the elementary teachers can be real short with them. I try to encourage them to write a note or ask questions."

Some school administrators see CDI as an alternative model of educational practice. For example, a school principal comments about the strengths of CDI in working with parents:

> "Head Start does a wonderful job in involving parents; that's a shortfall in what we do here. Many of our teachers are apprehensive in parents coming in to their classrooms; but Head Start parents are accustomed to helping."

Another dimension in CDI's relationship with public schools is collaboration regarding young children with disabilities. The Arkansas Department of Education has established a cooperative agreement with all local Head Start grantees and the state's 14 education cooperatives to facilitate early childhood services to children with disabilities. Head Start grantees agree to provide screening for all the children in their classes, to participate in subsequent evaluation procedures and the development of Individual Education Plans, and to serve as members of local Interagency Coordinating Councils. The Department of Education pays the costs of assessment, materials, and specialist staff and services for eligible children. CDI employs a special education coordinator who works with five different cooperatives. If Head Start personnel suspect a disability, they refer the child for assessment:

> "We try to sit in on key conferences with the coop staff and usually include the teacher or center director. The coop staff go through the whole process with parents, but our staff get lots of questions afterwards. And the most common arrangement for service is having a coop staff person come to a center twice a week and spend 30 minutes with a child during interest centers or outdoor play."

A more murky and complex issue to size up is the future intentions of public schools regarding early childhood and family services. It is clear that this issue is on the minds of local school administrators as they search for new ways to improve student performance and better ways to use resources. As one local superintendent commented:

> "We have a pattern of one set of kids doing well and a large number not accepting the challenge, for all sorts of reasons. And this continues on up through the grades. It scares me. Lots of what we do once kids are in school is remediation. Chapter 1 has kept lots of kids in school but at a very minimal level of progress and perhaps at a cost of a drag on the whole enterprise. There are different theories: one is if you didn't do it the first time you need to catch up. Another is we need to start earlier to eliminate the needs for remediation; that anything which could hamper academic gains needs to be handled developmentally."

For these and other reasons, school administrators are reexamining ways to be involved with younger children and families. As two superintendents comment, a key factor holding them back is funding:

> "I'm not reluctant to do more in health and family services but our main mission isn't adequately funded. It's a Catch-22. All the research tells us that if children don't receive supports early through their families we know they will be in remediation when they hit school. But we lack the resources -- or we lack the boldness to restructure our priorities."

> "What we're wanting is more involvement in early childhood education. Up till now we've worked with CDI. We haven't applied directly for state funding. Eventually I think we will. One need is for school-aged kids with no place to go; it would even help out our own teachers to have afterschool care. Serving fours or threes is another option, though it's a major expenditure and space issue to add a 14th or 15th year of education. I don't fear we can't do it; more that we won't be funded for it."

Participant Opinions and Outcomes

CDI offices are full of paperwork which track services provided to children and families. For instance, 77 parents were served in recent years in the Teen Parent Program: 44 have graduated from school or completed their GED, 15 are still enrolled in school, and 18 dropped out before completing the program. CDI also participates in external program evaluations in several of its special initiatives. Yet the most dominant mode for describing program outcomes at CDI is personal testimonies. When parents are asked about what they see as the result of participating in CDI programs, they speak mostly about the growth in their children and their enthusiasm for the program activities and staff:

> "My Sadie was an only child. For a quick minute I thought she was getting real spoiled. You know, with your first child you tend to overbuy. I was scared she'd act like a brat and wouldn't want to share. But the first day of class she said goodbye to me and she was off. She's grown up, she participates and she's more interested in learning."

> "My twins were extremely shy. At first during lunch they would sit there and not eat and not even look at anyone. Now they're like different kids; they can't stop talking."
>
> "I was worried about a stranger working with her in the home. She was shy at first. But then she started waking up and asking, 'Is my teacher coming today?'"
>
> "My five-year-old memorized a welcome speech for the graduation program and wasn't afraid to get up on the stage and talk. He's now 'teaching' his three-year-old sister. He has lots more self-esteem."
>
> "I always read and worked with my kids, but living in a remote part of the country they never played with other kids. So at the center they really picked up social interaction and appropriate behavior."
>
> "I remember that I cried during my first day in kindergarten and the fear stayed with me over the years... But, she's so excited about going to kindergarten and her teacher told me that in her free time she looks at books."

The second dominant theme in parent testimonials is how they have learned to work with their children differently as a result of CDI experiences:

> "I had my oldest child when I was only 15. I felt like I was nothing. I watched how they took care of the kids. I volunteered for nine months every day. I even went into labor with my next child at the center! You see the way they sit and talk to the kids and how they give them time out instead of spanking them."
>
> "Raising kids out in the sticks, where you don't see other kids, sometimes you think they're mentally retarded! When you see other kids their age, it helps."
>
> "I learned to be more patient on discipline. When I was raised, you got a warning and then you got spanked. I don't go to that extreme; I'm not so quick to spank them."
>
> "A few weeks ago, we had a meeting on reading readiness and we learned about making books. Both my parents died before I got out of high school. I wanted to let my child know that she was named for her grandparents. So I made her a book with mom and dad's pictures in it."
>
> "They encouraged my husband too. While I cook supper now he reads to her. It helped pull us together. He takes her to school and picks her up and helps out when he can. He helped with the Halloween party and helped paint one room."

A third area of parent comments related to parents' career and personal goals:

> "I was voted Chair of our Center Parent Committee. I dreaded it. I didn't think I could motivate all the people and do the fundraising. But I learned how to handle things without getting upset and it really helped my self-esteem."
>
> "Staying at home was real important to me. I didn't want to leave the security of the house with me and my kids. I was terrified of going anywhere. If I hadn't been in the program, I wouldn't have my GED, I wouldn't have volunteered at the elementary school and I wouldn't be registered at Arkansas Tech."

Front-line staff members show a similar pattern of recounting stories of successes with individual children and parents:

> "I worked with a woman in the Teen Parent Program who wrote me a note saying I taught her how to cope when her child cried. Often that's when parents may abuse their kids. We try to give them alternate ways. It turns out she had been abused herself as a child. And the only class she passed in high school that year was in Child Development where she got an 'A'."
>
> "We had a six-year-old who had been kicked out of kindergarten. They said he wasn't mature enough and was too attached to his mom. He's able to get on the bus now and fit in well now. I remember another kid whose hair was always uncombed, dirty clothes and face; we talked to the mom on her level and got him cleaned up. Another child who didn't know how to hold a crayon at the start of the year..another who could never relax..another little girl who had a nervous breakdown and we got her mom hooked up with mental health counseling."

These statements of CDI participants -- attesting to the profound impact CDI's programs have had on their lives, transforming them as individuals and families -- give validity to the concept of early childhood services. They also motivate staff members -- as expressions of gratitude and appreciation from families and as clear returns on the investment of time, professional skills, and emotional commitment to the job.

* * *

In summary, CDI blends its sources of funding and service offerings into a well-rounded child and family support package. CDI's classroom-based activities enable children to play and learn with peers representing a range of backgrounds. Families can continue to bring their children to CDI via voucher and fee-based arrangements as they make progress economically. In addition, by offering classes and home-based programs for parents with infants up through the school years, CDI allows families to build a stable and lasting partnership with its staff and organization.

The CDI program also provides a wealth of services to parents. Collaborations play a vital role in CDI's service delivery, and interagency relationships are built on and improved by personal connections among professionals. Given CDI's size and reach, the agency is itself a significant partner and support for other social service projects. There is also a healthy rapport between CDI and the local school districts in which it operates. CDI serves as a model of parent involvement, hopefully spurring changes in how schools interact with families.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Program Governance

As a sizeable, independent enterprise, CDI has a formal structure for decision making on policy issues. It has a governing board of 23 members, which includes eight business leaders, a lawyer, a school superintendent, two university faculty members, and 11 county judges. (Judges are the chief public officials in Arkansas counties, akin to city mayors.) The second major governance group within CDI is the Head Start Policy Council, which represents parents of children served by CDI's Head Start funding, as well as community representatives. Each local center has a committee of parents and community people who elect representatives to the overall 40-plus member Policy Council.

The Policy Council must approve all major decisions on Head Start operations, including staff hiring and firing, the annual budget and grant application, and major shifts in program services. For example, a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Policy Council reviewed and approved six hiring decisions and heard two progress reports on new initiatives: a new demonstration project using family day care and plans for financing a new facility in a community.

CDI has a five-year strategic plan, developed by staff, the Head Start Policy Council, and a committee of the Board of Directors. The plan sets priorities for expanding services, upgrading facilities, and improving the quality of operations:

- **Expanded services:** Start new partnership programs with public schools and additional child care initiatives with area corporations; institute a formalized adult literacy component to all center operations; define a new family day care service strategy; improve ratios of staff to children in the infant program; attain National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation for all centers; and add a coordinator for volunteers and community partnerships.

- **Facilities:** Build two new centers and a central office facility; renovate several other sites.

- **Staff development:** Require Head Start teachers to complete Child Development Associate (CDA) training; encourage staff to take college courses for credit and earn degrees.

- **Organizational capacity:** Enhance research and evaluation capacity; acquire additional computers, and improve marketing and public relations efforts.

Funding

CDI's 1994 annual report shows total revenues of $6,123,667 from 15 separate public and private funding sources. The top five sources of revenue generated over 60 percent of CDI's income:

• Head Start	$2,465,113
• Child care vouchers	466,834
• Fee-based child care	436,849
• Parent-Child Centers	268,554
• Even Start	216,632

Thus, researching new funding opportunities, developing proposals, and keeping up with changes in existing funding sources are high priority assignments for the central office staff:

> "Fundraising is a big source of pressure for me. The Board expects me to do it. I never know when one source of funds will drop and how to keep support for skilled people in each of our areas. For example, coming up in our fourth year of Even Start funding is a shift in management from the federal to the state level, and we're worried this will increase the competition for those funds. Another huge change we weathered was when the state changed its system for funding child care from provider contracts to individual vouchers. We'd had a Title XX contract for 12 years before the inception of the voucher system and we opposed the change. We thought it would wipe us out, but we've ended up with four times as much revenue as we had under the contract system. In the early days, two or three people wrote all the proposals, but now we've all learned how. We get out to national and regional conferences and get to all sessions having to do with proposal development or new initiatives which represent opportunities. We try to keep a person on key state advisory committees."

CDI leadership have been skillful and successful in using different funding sources to maintain a consistent range of program services over time:

> "We had worked on a home-based Head Start option during the 1970s. Then in 1986, we chose to move into HIPPY because Hillary Clinton wanted to try it. We have supported HIPPY through Head Start, Arkansas Better Chance, state money from JTPA, and some foundation funding."

Proposal development also varies by the type of agency and project. For example, as an existing Head Start grantee, CDI is assured of continued funding for the largest segment of its budget without competing with other organizations. Indeed, if proposed budget increases are approved at the federal level, CDI could increase its revenue from Head Start fairly easily. Other CDI projects involve competition with other agencies in the state or throughout the nation. For example, the state Better Chance early childhood funding is awarded on a competitive basis, with roughly one-third of current grants to education agencies, one-third to Head Start grantees, and one-third to community-based non-profit organizations. CDI's Head Start family day care project is a national research and demonstration initiative in which only twenty projects were awarded for the entire country.

CDI's development efforts also tend to build on past relationships in local communities:

> "Pat, our literacy coordinator, had served on a health committee in Dardanelle some six years back, looking at the teen pregnancy rate and working with a very progressive school superintendent. We looked into funding a project through a federal Sex Equity program and then as a non-traditional school proposal through vocational education. Neither of those routes panned out, so we are now using those ideas and relationships to approach the Rockefeller Foundation Renaissance Initiative; using a planning process of asking business leaders and citizens what they expect from high school graduates and then tracking backwards to changes for the schools and early intervention services."

CDI provides most of its full-day child care services through a combination of individual vouchers from the county departments of social services and parental fees. These streams of revenue require management strategies which are very different from other government grants and contracts. In the case of the child care voucher programs, Department of Human Services staff approve eligibility for the voucher program for periods of six months. Parents must be working or in school at least 32 hours per week to qualify. Each county is allocated a fund for vouchers; beyond that level of funding, families are put on a waiting list. One of the fiscal management staff explains details of the process:

> "Voucher reimbursement rates vary by county, but we maintain one salary scale across all sites so we 'make' or 'lose' money due to differential rates across the different counties. Reimbursement rates are based on the average rate charged by child care centers in each county. Every voucher must be billed individually and each day of attendance must be checked. One person works on this at the central office, though no administrative costs are reimbursed. You must serve a child for six weeks before you can begin submitting vouchers. We must be on time with our reports or we'll go broke in a hurry! To make this work, we stress training center directors to control the hours of staff. And we track attendance and cash flow on a weekly basis."

CDI's parental fee program involves a similar level of complexity in management. Present fees are $50.00 per week for infant and toddler care for up to ten hours per day; $42.50 per week for preschoolers; and $20.00 per week for school-age care for up to three hours per day.

> "The voucher program allows for partial reimbursement by parents on a sliding fee scale. We also set up a fee system for parents who weren't eligible for any public program but wanted to enroll their children. We don't advertise or push our parent fee operation, but we like to have a mix of children from community families and we like to meet community needs, so it's there if people approach us. The fee system took about two years to set up so that it was running smoothly. We get a computer printout for each center each week, with attendance broken down by Head Start, voucher and parental fee basis. We use this system to track changes, dropouts, and cash flow. The attendance data is used as a cross-walk to chart the funds and hours for DDC paid staff, and additional hours for temporary staff which the center directors can allocate. We're now working with the Mobius Corporation on an attendance system which would also generate reports for U.S. Department of Agriculture reimbursement and hold data on health and education assessments."

Another emphasis in the narrative of funding accomplishments centers on garnering resources for facilities. For example, the small town of Coal Hill had a Head Start center for a number of years, but the site was less than ideal; CDI was considering shifting to another location as part of an overall plan to upgrade facilities.

> "The mayor called me and said don't move the center, we'll raise the funds to rebuild it. A volunteer in the community is the first cousin of Mary Ann Stephens of the Stephens, Inc. A teacher aide mentioned to Mary Ann's mother that the center might close. She gave us $10,000 at first and eventually gave $50,000 in cash. We then got Job Corps participants and other community people to help with construction, which saved us substantially on the costs."

All in all, CDI illustrates how early childhood programs must accept the "hassle factor" associated with funding: administrative complexity, risk, and responsibility. At the same time, the limits of funding create a "hustle factor," a competitive environment for agencies striving to exist or expand. One can work hard writing proposals which do not win funding; or one can win resources to start a new project and then face a challenge in sustaining that funding in the future. And CDI does not stand still. At a recent Board of Directors meeting, two new initiatives were presented. A new Head Start Family Day Care Project will recruit and train seven local residents to serve 42 children in their homes. A second major effort is to build a new center in Danville to serve 80 children with funding from the Arkansas

Industrial Development Corporation and contributions from local poultry companies, the United Way, the local Parent Center Committee, and the CDI Board. The city is donating land in a park area next to its senior citizen's center, which will allow children and to visit and interact with older community residents.

Staffing and Training

CDI employs over 300 full- and part-time staff people across its many programs, and, like most education and human service agencies, it spends the majority of its money on salaries and fringe benefits. Thus the agency's policies on hiring, training, and compensation of staff have a great impact on the financial soundness and overall effectiveness of the agency.

CDI has an eight-tiered career ladder system for staff positions ranging from classroom aides to the executive director. In 1991, Head Start teachers and home visitors earned from $5.00 to $11.20 per hour based on their level of experience and training; center directors earned from $10.40 to 15.55 per hour.

> "Salary raises are generally based on our Head Start funding. If ACF approves a cost-of-living increase, we make raises across the board for all staff. In addition, we give step increases if funds are available and their evaluation is average or above. We do offer a common fringe benefits package across all programs and positions, including 80 percent of the cost of individual health insurance, vacation and sick leave, and a 6 percent contribution to a retirement plan."

Executive Director Williams describes a conscious staffing strategy designed to support a stable, high quality work force:

> "Our staffing strategy has been to not hire custodians or bus drivers -- nor do we have a large staff of family service workers at the center level. We expect the center staff to do more things and then we can pay them more."

There is one major problem in the area of staff salaries: all "developmental day care staff" in the centers (those paid via the child care voucher and parent fee revenue) are paid at the lowest level of the salary schedule, the child care assistant category. The rates of payment in these programs will not support staff salaries equal to those of the Head Start program; so developmental day care staff are limited to hourly wages ranging from $4.30 to $6.55 per hour based on years of experience. Thus, while children in the centers are not segregated by the source of funding for which they qualify, there is a definite two-tier structure to the frontline teaching staff. The result of this situation is that many staff enter the agency in the child care assistant category and then apply for Head Start jobs. While this career development option is beneficial for staff members, it results in higher turnover and less stable relationships between staff and children in the infant-toddler child care programs. As one staff member explained it:

> "Salaries for center directors are okay, but staff in the infant-toddler and preschool child care voucher programs are the lowest paid and have the greatest level of turnover. They think their job is equally important and it's very stressful. We lose some wonderful people. The youngest ones need the stability with staff the most."

In terms of training and staff development, six Head Start staff can participate in the Child Development Associate (CDA) training program each year. They receive release time, free tuition, and an allowance for books. Completing the certification program earns them 12 hours of college credit.

Other staff may participate in college courses on their own initiative.

Like nearly every aspect of CDI's operations, strategic training involves shrewd use of different program funds and policies:

> "We try to coordinate some agency-wide training and other sessions which cross program lines. For example, we have three major infant-toddler programs with staff in different locations. The Parent-Child Center program provides the most generous support for training; so we open all their events to the entire staff."

There are also monthly training sessions in different locations with staff of several centers, but there is no regular opportunities for staff to observe activities in other locations. CDI uses a system of rotating boxes containing videos and publications on various topics between centers for staff members to watch and read individually or use as the basis for group discussions.

Center-based personnel have weekly staff meetings. They are usually divided in two groups, those working with three- to five-year-olds and those working with infants and toddlers. Minutes of the meetings go to the central office. The local center director is responsible for staff evaluations; home visitor supervisors evaluate their home-based staff.

> "Another part of management is dealing with people when they need to leave the system. We've learned how to counsel them to leave and help to place them in other positions. For example, one of our former center directors is now teaching in a public school; two others have returned to teaching jobs in other sites in our agency."

Staff in the various home visitation programs also participate in regular training:

> "Every other Friday, we have a full day of training for home-based staff on topics like paperwork, personal skills, child abuse, spouse abuse and problems such as a father making sexual advances. We've also started a mentor system for our ten home visitors who are funded by Head Start. I've found the group is too much for one supervisor to handle and when we designed training the more experienced people were bored with sessions which were needed by the other staff members."

Program Management Strategies

CDI's size, scope, and diversity of revenue sources creates two difficult tensions for the agencies central management:

- Ensuring compliance with guidelines and requirements from 15 different funding sources, while encouraging coherence and integration in front-line services.

- Enhancing program quality through a balance of consistent procedures and standards and site-based adaptability and autonomy.

CDI has learned to adhere to a variety of different standards for program services, due to its diverse set of funding sources. For example, Head Start's guidelines for home-based services calls for a staff to family ratio of 1:10. Even Start uses a ratio closer to 1:20, and the state Better Chance program uses 1:15. Similarly, the state law for day care licensing requires ratios of 1:6 for infants and 1:9 for toddlers, but the Parent-Child Center program guidelines require 1:4 ratios.

> "The Department of Human Services voucher program will not reimburse us for the costs of all the services we provide in Head Start, and families who pay fees aren't going to pay for all these things either. So our assessment system for the upper income family children only covers basic health and development, while Head Start families are asked for more detail on social services and other family needs."

At the same time, CDI wants its local centers to operate as coherent entities rather than a fragmented set of separate categorical staff and programs. One of CDI's goals is for staff, parents, and children to feel they belong to a common CDI enterprise, instead of identifying themselves with one specific definition of need or category of service. For example, CDI classrooms generally include children supported by Head Start funds, child care vouchers, and parental fees; all staff within the center are supervised by one center administrator.

> "We have to work hard to keep our staff and services cohesive under the CDI umbrella. Every time you pick up a new program it tends to take two or three years for the people to feel a part of the CDI team. We learned in the early 1970s in Home Start and other demonstration projects that the 'feds' will try to split you off by having separate conferences and technical assistance and guidelines. More recently HIPPY has been trying to enforce a separate identity for its programs. We have one mission statement and philosophy and we stress teamwork in our staff training and operations. We promote centers as a coherent unit with one coordinator. We have local center committees with all types of parents. We try to have central office assignments which cut across funding sources."

This perspective was shared by other central office staff:

> "When you start each grant, the people feel a strong separate program identity. So with our home-based staff, we do common training, we put people in offices together. For instance, in Dardanelle, we have space in the basement of the Post Office for five staff people, funded by three different programs. We also build relationships as families move between programs as their needs change."

CDI uses several strategies to support consistent program quality across twenty, widely-dispersed centers and numerous clusters of home-based staff. First, a detailed procedures manual is a resource for enhancing consistency in local practices and policies:

> "In the first era of Head Start, people just did things their own creative way, but as the agency has grown we've found we need a clearer management system. About ten years ago, we developed our first procedures manual. We try to combine clear policies with administrative flexibility. The central office staff focuses on diagnosing breakdowns as they crop up."

The procedures manual is an imposing loose-leaf binder is filled with descriptions, forms, and rules relating to: recruitment, enrollment, Head Start performance standards, child care facility licensing, the child care voucher system, property management, food service, health and social services, child abuse, behavior management, parent involvement, volunteers, staff training, transitions of children into public schools, and more. Materials vary in the degree of detail and prescriptiveness. For example, each center must keep a "daily temperature log" for refrigerators holding lunches and snack foods. CDI must also account each year for over $1 million of in-kind support for its various programs, including donations of parent and community volunteer time, materials, cash, and other services.

There are standard forms for important program functions such as assessing family needs when children enroll at CDI and tracking children's progress as they participate in programs. For example, to assess children CDI uses an eight-page checklist that includes categories for auditory and visual memory; visual perception; visual, fine- and gross-motor skills; cognitive and social-emotional skills; expressive and receptive language; and self-help ability. Each of these categories includes a variety of specific, observable sub-skills keyed to a general sequence of development. For instance, under cognitive skills, children with a developmental age of three years are expected to be able to "discriminate between big and little" or "separate two blocks from a group of blocks." Four-year-olds are expected to recognize their printed first name, to know basic shapes, numbers (1-5), and colors. Five-year-olds are expected to "organize a set of pictures to show a story sequence." Staff fill in a check-list grid for each month, providing a running summary of the child's development.

A second strategy for supporting program quality is supervision of local sites by central office specialists in health services, mental health, early childhood education, special education, family support, and home visiting. These people work as a team to support the frontline staff:

> "We have a weekly meeting of all program coordinators, which includes a review of each center location; who has been there; any observations on good things or concerns. We use a written recommendation form to follow up each visit which we send to the center director and then we have a form to track follow-up. We also try to coordinate our calendars in terms of future training, special events, travel, and visits to centers. Once a month we meet with the center directors and hear from them."

However, central office staff balance their roles of supervisors/inspectors with active support to local center directors and staff members:

> "Frontline workers become a team because they're grappling with the realities or problems they see with youngsters and with parents. Our job is to make them feel that we're part of their team. We need to demonstrate a human concern for families and a willingness to come out when they have needs and problems. Central staff are part of the screening teams so that we make contacts with families. I then review every family needs assessment. We sit down one-on-one with staff and see what resources are available. I serve as a go-between with the country mental health offices. I set up joint appointments with therapists and teachers. We often arrange for a specialist to visit to provide play therapy for a child. Other cases we refer to therapeutic day care placements or use our contract with a Ph.D. psychologist to do observations in the classroom. We also do one-to-one training with staff on classroom management."

Finally, CDI balances the need for consistency in program operations with flexibility in professional practice. The agency balances top-down supervision with the need to empower local site managers:

> "Our current emphasis is to give center directors and home visitor supervisors more management responsibility. We took out a second level of center supervisors who used to work out of the central office and put salary increases for the center directors and home visit supervisors with the savings. We work one-on-one with them as much as possible, trying to emphasize leadership development and to model a coaching perspective. If we see recurrent patterns of problems, we try to ask why. The second week of December we put on a management retreat for about 50 people, all the front-line supervisors and central office staff."

* * *

In summary, the two main strands of activity for CDI as an organization are program administration and fiscal management. On the administrative side, CDI has a concrete methodology, the result of planning and experience, for implementing and supporting its disparate centers. Its procedures manual serves as a documented "how to" guide, and centralized supervision bolstering site-based management is an efficient and rewarding way to deliver CDI's bundle of integrated services.

CDI has one mission statement unifying its various funding sources, and it combines and allocates resources to make them go as far as possible. CDI receives this diverse set of funding sources at some cost in terms of administrative burden and complexity, however. Overhead costs of learning how to access more than a dozen separate funding streams, keep up with the schedule of preparing proposals for refunding and current operations, maintain separate accounting and program reporting systems, and assure compliance with different sets of program standards and eligibility definitions are major obligations. Beyond the pressures on the central office team, center directors and front-line staff need training to keep track of different services for which families are eligible in different programs. In CDI's commendable efforts to avoid segregation of children and staff by program source, staff are still accountable for mentally cross-walking between disparate program requirements as they plan and work.

CONCLUSION

CDI is an exemplary model of how an agency can expand and diversify services from an initial base of Head Start funding. One must credit Executive Director Williams's leadership ability, which explains much of CDI's success and expansion. She mustered the ambition, energy, and skills to push her organization forward -- creating an environment within which other managers could flourish, negotiating with external funding sources and learning how to compete successfully at the national level for demonstration projects.

CDI stands out for the many services it offers, due in large part to the financial support of numerous organizations. But it is important to note that diverse funding also engenders managerial complexity. Untangling the web of overlapping or incompatible eligibility requirements takes time and thought. Administering multiple program components and supervising a large staff demands clear guidelines, communication, and values. While continuing to work on these issues, CDI's major challenge today is to safeguard quality from site to site as it continues to expand.

INN-CIRCLE, INC. - CEDAR RAPIDS, IA.

"Creating Community for Homeless Families with Young Children"

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Director	Wayne Woods
Year Opened	1991
Number of Children Served	78
1993-1994 Budget	$745,000
Primary Funding Source	Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- Inn-Circle shows the potential and challenges of designing an early childhood strategy to meet the needs of homeless single parents. Inn-Circle's facility houses infant-toddler, preschool, and after-school classrooms under the leadership of the local Head Start program. The initiative also provides housing for families for up to two years and a comprehensive program of educational, employment, counseling, and social services for parents and families. The early childhood services give single parents more flexibility to meet their own employment and educational needs - and help them become more informed and capable in raising their children.

- Inn-Circle and Head Start staff work with parents in an empowering fashion with the ultimate goal of making families less dependent on social services and government programs. They encourage families to develop skills and habits to support each other, they expect residents to participate in governing and managing the facility, and they prepare parents to belong and contribute to neighborhood institutions and networks. Inn-Circle sees itself not as an isolated program, but as a community of children and families that is connected with local social groups, schools, houses of worship, and other community institutions.

- Inn-Circle works with more than a dozen federal, state, and local agencies which provide financial support to the program. They encourage local groups and residents to contribute time and materials to the program, to strengthen Inn Circle's connections with its neighbors. Inn-Circle also collaborates with other health, mental health, social service, and education institutions to provide convenient, appropriate services to children and families and to facilitate the transition of residents to permanent homes, stable employment, and responsible parenting.

INTRODUCTION

Inn-Circle, Inc. is a comprehensive initiative to serve homeless families headed by single parents in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Funded by a wide range of public and private sources, Inn-Circle provides transitional housing for 42 families, offers a comprehensive early childhood program for young children from birth through school-age, and mandates parent participation in either employment, job training, or education. The emphasis of the program's parent support strategies is to improve residents' ability to make decisions, take responsibility, and interact productively with their community.

Opening in February 1991, Inn-Circle was developed in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on a former motel site. Some of the motel rooms were converted into community rooms for Inn-Circle gatherings where children play and adults hold meetings, administrative offices, and Head Start and other classrooms. Others were remodelled into living units: eight efficiencies, 13 one-bedroom apartments, and 23 two-bedroom apartments. Inn-Circle is located on what is essentially a non-residential street; the program has had to try hard to give the facility a homey atmosphere. Playground equipment is located in the center of the complex so children have a safe place to play. The former motel swimming pool is completely filled with sand, creating a massive sand box. Rooms are decorated with donated used furniture. The tenants organize holiday celebrations and birthday parties.

Inn-Circle is a model two-generational program: it gives homeless families the security of having a place to live, as well as other services intended to help families make the transition to permanent housing arrangements. Because the well-being of a mother and her children is co-dependent -- a mother cannot concentrate on work, training, or school if she is not confident that her young children are well taken care of in day care; and children may have difficulty in day care or school if their parents lack self-esteem or literacy skills -- Inn-Circle considers both the parent and child components equally important. It strives to make the family whole and healthy by providing quality services for both generations, including:

- Head Start (for 3-4 year olds)
- Full-day and year-round day care (for 1-5 year olds)
- Afterschool and tutoring services (for kindergarten through sixth graders)
- Adult education, counseling, and social services

These early childhood services, in conjunction with a supportive place to live, give parents the stability, security, and freedom needed to further their lives. As one staff member put it, Inn-Circle's strategy contributes to family betterment by a combination of tangible support services and clear expectations:

> "We recognize that social and emotional support and concrete help with food, housing, child care and employment must be provided before a family can benefit from other intervention."

One of Inn-Circle's goals is for families to leave the facility able to function in the greater community. Inn-Circle is not a haven where residents have little contact with outside institutions. Instead it is a place that encourages residents to make community connections and learn to maneuver their way around other social service agencies. Inn-Circle views this as a vital step in residents' independence and successful integration into the community. The Head Start director says the goal of Inn-Circle is:

> "To catch homeless families who might otherwise fall through the cracks and not only link them with other institutional service systems, but also help them re-establish informal support networks with other families, extended families and grassroots community organizations like churches, Scout groups and cultural/ethnic associations. We want people to be active participants in an enriching community life, not just clients in large public institutions."

Inn-Circle deserves analysis as a program because in addition to being an effective solution for a segment of Cedar Rapids's homeless population, it shows how Head Start can operate successfully within a transitional housing complex and contribute to developing a community dedicated to raising young children. Together, Head Start and Inn-Circle demonstrate that it is possible to mainstream disadvantaged families and families with problems into the community.

We begin this case study by discussing the program's beginnings, the policy context in which it was developed, and family and community needs. Then we describe Inn-Circle's services: after the initial recruitment, offerings include Head Start, an infant/toddler coop and afterschool, nutrition and health services, and parent involvement activities. Following a brief look at program outcomes, we move to Inn-Circle's organizational strategy. Here we focus on staffing and training issues, Inn-Circle's funding approach, and the extent of its collaboration with other community agencies. The case study concludes with comments on what has made this family support program, built around a broad set of early childhood education offerings, a valid model to counter homelessness and family isolation.

Program Inception and Policy Context

The Inn-Circle initiative began under the leadership of the Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP) in response to the rising homelessness in Cedar Rapids. HACAP is a private non-profit Community Action Agency (CAA) that runs 24 Head Start sites over a six-county area. Its other components include Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); a transitional housing program with several facilities; a child care resource and referral service; and elderly outreach and energy assistance programs.

HACAP received the initial HUD Supplemental Assistance for Facilities to Assist the Homeless grant that funds Inn-Circle. This grant calls for collaboration in the housing, health, and human services fields. To move the program from concept to reality required concerted community action. HACAP formed a partnership with a local construction company, Berry Development Corporation. Together they created the BDC Charity Corporation to purchase the motel facility under a lease/purchase program; ownership of the property eventually will pass to HACAP. The citizens of Cedar Rapids also helped set up Inn-Circle: the Hall Foundation provided funding for major renovation of the west wing of the complex, and local companies and organizations sponsored the program by donating $2,000 in cash plus $1,000 worth of volunteer time to renovate apartment units or work on the grounds. Kirkwood Community College students also held dances to raise funds for Inn-Circle. These contributions were a positive way to involve the whole community in helping local homeless families.

Meanwhile the state was in the process of redefining its early childhood education policy. Iowa's vision for early education is based on the belief that high quality early childhood programs help at-risk children become capable and competent adults: prevention rather than remediation is the wiser investment for the future well-being of all citizens in the state. Therefore the state legislature has been proactive in supporting legislation to ensure early childhood program funding. In 1988 it established the Iowa Child Development Coordinating Council, whose mission is to advocate for children and administer model preschool programs for disadvantaged, at-risk children. The Council distributes the state at-risk funds that support Inn-Circle's Head Start program.

Family and Community Needs

An industrial city surrounded by agriculture, Cedar Rapids has a population of 109,000. Cedar Rapids has an educated base of residents, with the University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa close by. In addition to hosting old industry and newer high-tech companies, Cedar Rapids attracts people from smaller towns who move to the city looking for opportunity.

Homelessness in Cedar Rapids is caused by several trends. The city experienced the decline in low-income housing that occurred in cities nationwide in the 1980s. The neighborhood with most of the low-income housing was located between the two Cedar Rapids hospitals, and many apartments were converted into doctors' offices. At first this was seen as community improvement; then it became apparent that families were being pushed out onto the street. In Cedar Rapids's homeless shelters, 44 percent of the occupants were children. Now there is a virtual moratorium on housing demolition and low-income neighborhoods are actively trying to stay residential and affordable. Other factors besides housing availability that contribute to homelessness are domestic violence, substance abuse, and loss of low-skill jobs that pay a living wage.

Inn-Circle has a population of 42 families and 78 children. Most of the mothers (75 percent) have high school diplomas, and many (38 percent) have a few years of college. Of the mothers, seven are married, 15 are unmarried, 15 are divorced, four are separated, and one is a widow. Fully one-third of Inn-Circle families come from domestic violence shelters. Some of the children have moved eight to ten times in their lives before coming to Inn-Circle, often staying with relatives or in shelters; some have also attended five different schools by the end of elementary school.

The purpose of Inn-Circle is to give residents stability and security, and in this environment they can consider how to improve their circumstances and learn self-reliance. The director of Inn-Circle explains:

> "When somebody's living in a tent in the park, it's hard to imagine that they're going to make it. But they can make it. The objective of our program is to give them the tools to make it back into the mainstream a lot faster. There are some who would make it without us, and some people who choose to not make it -- that's a reality, too. But, those in the middle who could go either way are our focus."

PROGRAM SERVICES

Recruitment of Families

Although initially Inn-Circle staff sought out prospective tenants in shelters, today candidates are more likely to contact the program directly. As the program has also received much media attention, community agencies actively refer people to Inn-Circle. The companies and churches that sponsored the apartments continue to help Inn-Circle by advertising its availability, and Inn-Circle now has a waiting list of 25-50 people at any one time.

Because Inn-Circle receives funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the program adheres to a set of requirements put forth by HUD:

- Families must be homeless and children under age 18
- Parents must start school, work, or job training within 14 days
- Parents must be in school, work, or job training at least 20 hours per week
- Parents must participate in substance abuse treatment, if necessary
- Parents must pay 30 percent of their adjusted gross income for rent

Parents also must participate in the Inn-Circle community and develop a long-range plan for self-sufficiency. The maximum stay allowed by HUD is 24 months. Program staff are responsible to enforce these rules; while at the same time, providing encouragement and responsive support to Inn Circle residents.

There are between three and five openings per month at Inn-Circle. The admission process is fairly extensive: an applicant goes through pre-application to get her name on the entry list, then an assessment covering family background, education, and budget; interviews; and, finally, reference checks. The applicant must call Inn-Circle and make assessment arrangements and leave reliable numbers where she can be reached: if Inn-Circle makes three attempts to contact her and they all fail, the candidate loses her spot on the list. This admission process helps screen out people who are not self-directed and lack the initiative to help themselves and their families. It also ensures that Inn-Circle is viewed as more than a place where the rent is cheap.

Admissions are handled by HACAP's Supportive Services Team, composed of representatives of social services, education, hospitals, mental health, substance abuse, and other agencies in the community. This team meets every two weeks to review individual family goal plans and determine whether a family applying for admission is right for the program and what special resources might be available for it. A family is accepted into Inn-Circle according to the number of priority points it receives on a set of criteria that takes into account where the family is living, marital status, number of children, presence of abuse, and protective service arrangements. The Inn-Circle director describes an all-too-frequent scenario:

> "Let's suppose that you're in a domestic abuse shelter. You're married, you have two children, your husband's just beaten you up, now this is very common. Then your priority points for getting into this program are very high. One, you're in a shelter, two, you're homeless, three, you probably meet all of the financial requirements."

While it seeks to serve families with acute, multiple problems, Inn-Circle also expects its residents to make personal and educational gains. Therefore the only participants the program admits are those the interagency acceptance committee deems capable of and ready for taking control of their lives. Although some may criticize this approach for "creaming" the best applicants, Inn-Circle firmly believes that its program is not right for many women, who may need a place to stay but are not ready to assume responsibility for their future. Because it has limited resources, Inn-Circle targets women who are eager and willing to make the effort to change their lives.

Once accepted, an intake worker enrolls the children in school, and signs up the family for food stamps. The housing specialist works with the family on the lease arrangement, puts the family onto the waiting list for subsidized housing in the community, makes sure the apartment has furnishings, and helps the mother decide what responsibilities she will assume as part of the cooperative housing effort. A family development counselor helps each family set short- and long-term goals to remedy its situation, identify family strengths, and make links with needed services. Finally, a guidance counselor helps the mother make decisions about employment, job training, or education options.

Classroom-Based Early Childhood Services

Head Start at Inn-Circle serves three- and four-year-old children who live in the facility or the local neighborhood. Inn-Circle's two Head Start classrooms are open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The children enrolled at the center who live in the community are from low-income families who need full-day Head Start services so their parents can work or attend school. Some of the Inn-Circle mothers need to leave their children for the extra hours to meet their work or school schedules.

Inn-Circle has added an infant room for children from six-weeks-old to two-years-old and a toddler room for two- to three- year-olds, thus ensuring educational programs are available to all children living on the premises. Although these two rooms receive funding from federal block grants, there is not enough money to cover the expense of staff; therefore these programs are run as cooperatives with parents contributing time to the classrooms.

A teacher explains why the full-day preschool is so important:

> "We believe that there are effects of homelessness that don't cease when housing is obtained. We found it took the Inn-Circle group much longer than other groups to settle into group routines and to understand that they could even expect predictability in their day. This process of establishing routines took approximately six months, rather than the usual two or three weeks with other groups of children. All transitions and minor changes in schedule or staff are still very difficult for the children. At nap time, a one-to-one ratio is needed to help the children rest. We have also observed higher emotional needs in the group and there is an increased level of verbal and physical aggression among the children."

Some of the formerly homeless children cannot express themselves well or follow rules; some tend to use obscenities. Others are afraid to nap because the napping mats remind them of shelters they have stayed in. Thus, while Head Start offers a fairly typical early childhood education program, the homelessness aspect adds another challenging dimension to teaching. Says one teacher:

> "I feel like it's about three times as much work as a regular Head Start program. The families are more intense and are right on site. The counselors have much more work to do and a lot of the recordkeeping that counselors usually do has fallen on the teacher here."

Along with the classroom program, Head Start has a home visiting component that focuses on both the child's educational needs and the family's needs as a whole. The Head Start staff does three home visits a year, enabling mothers to share their ideas and concerns with a professional educator. Even though the teachers are well aware of the environment in which Inn-Circle families live, they still feel it is important to actually go into the apartments and learn more about the mother's interests and habits. Staff also find that home visits are an appropriate time to ask questions and gather information to bring to the inter-agency case management team. One teacher describes how mothers benefit from home visits:

> "I think part of our vision is to create a safe place for our parents. Our parents want their children to be successful, they want [the kids] to learn that there are so many pieces of [the parents] that were never allowed to be children. And so we really strive to make parents feel good."

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The HACAP Head Start director says home visiting helps the family, child, and parent-child interaction:

> "We really have two different types of home visits. One is a home visit that's done by a counselor, and there the focus is on the family situation and on family development. Then as part of the regular Head Start program, we have a home visit that's a lot more focused on the child, the child's educational development, and building the skills the parent has to support their child's growth. We talk about the importance of books in the home and address parents' concerns about books getting torn or colored in. We talk about materials that are in the home already and basic activities the parent and child can do together, with the emphasis on the parent being the one to present it to the child. We try to build the capacity of the parent to do activities when we're not there."

Relationships with Public Schools

Inn-Circle tries to influence the philosophical outlook of the public school system so that it is more proactive in establishing a positive parent/school relationship. The program set up the Inn-Circle/College Community Schools Advisory Committee, which has as its goal to assure a smooth transition for children living in Inn-Circle who will attend College Community schools. The committee is comprised of eight people: from College Community, two first grade teachers, a guidance counselor, and a middle school teacher; from Inn-Circle, the educational enhancement/activity coordinator (whose role is to be a liaison between Inn-Circle and the public school system), the person who handles community outreach, a Head Start teacher, and a Head Start family development counselor.

The committee has articulated its expectations of both parents and school staff for preparing children for the transition to school. For instance, the committee feels that before school starts parents should read to their children every day, go to the library regularly, encourage their children to express their thoughts and actions in an appropriate manner, and have responsibilities at home. The committee also recommends parents and children share their feelings about going to school and visit the school together to become familiar with the different rooms. As part of Inn-Circle's school enhancement program, children beginning kindergarten the next fall have the opportunity to work with an elementary school teacher in the Inn-Circle community room during the summer.

The advisory committee also believes that schools must take the initiative to get parents involved in their child's education and has presented school staff with a list of recommended actions. Before school starts, teachers should contact the child via a note or phone call to welcome them to the classroom, invite the parent to visit or volunteer in the classroom and participate in parent/school activities and organizations, and agree upon convenient times for parents and teachers to call or meet with each other to address questions and concerns.

Prior to the start of school, the school enhancement/activity coordinator serves as a source of information, telling parents school enrollment dates, school office hours and schedules, room and bus assignments, cost of breakfast/lunch tickets, and more. She has the necessary enrollment papers, school medical and emergency forms, supply lists, and phone numbers to assist parents in enrolling their children in school. Head Start teachers serve as a resource to answer parents' questions. A weekly residents' newsletter includes upcoming school events and articles pertaining to children and parent organizational events within the school.

Since its inception, Inn-Circle has seen a significant increase in the number of school-age children in the facility and has added an on-site afterschool day care program for children from kindergarten to sixth grade who attend school in the College Community school district. The educational enhancement/activity coordinator runs the afterschool program, which is staffed by one elementary school teacher and three aides from College Community. The program provides reading, writing, and speaking experiences; it has two computers, a printer, educational software and videos, math manipulatives, writing and art supplies, games, puzzles, and sports equipment. Books of various reading levels are available to residents and can be checked out. Inn-Circle and the school district share funds that allow Inn-Circle mothers of school-age children and College Community teacher and aides to work together to give children supplemental instruction.

One of the educational enhancement/activity coordinator's goals is to build a trusting relationship with the mothers so that they feel able to approach her and ask her to arrange extra help for their children in reading, math, or other subjects. The coordinator also hopes to reach a level of comfort in the relationship that lets her discuss personal issues with mothers, such as reminding a mother to wake up early enough in the morning to get a child to school on time. Another approach she uses is to work with a child within the school setting to establish a history of friendly interactions and then work with a mother, who might be wary of anyone associated with the public school system, to gain her confidence. The coordinator, along with other Inn-Circle staff, has a goal to increase district employees' sensitivity to the circumstances that homeless children face and their unique needs.

Health Services

Inn-Circle families face several barriers in obtaining health care. Many are not from the area and do not have a doctor in Cedar Rapids, and, although the women in the families are eligible for Medipass (Iowa's version of Medicaid), most of the doctors in Cedar Rapids that take this insurance are not taking new patients. Some Inn-Circle residents are thus forced to go to doctors located as far as 25 miles away.

In the interest of creating both accessible and affordable health care opportunities for Inn-Circle residents, St. Luke's Hospital acted as a broker to encourage the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) to establish a Well Child Clinic at Inn-Circle. The clinic provides health and dental screening, immunizations, and referrals to doctors. Originally doctors from St. Luke's had planned to staff the clinic; however, they discovered that they cannot collect Title XIX (Medicaid) monies for work done outside their own offices. Therefore St. Luke's donated and furnished the clinic by renovating one of the motel rooms; the VNA staffs the clinic and donates supplies.

The clinic operates one day a month at Inn-Circle and accepts Medicaid payments. People who are between Medicaid and 185 percent of poverty level receive services free of charge; those outside that range are charged on a sliding fee scale. A representative from the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is stationed at the clinic, which is also a pick-up point for payments from WIC.

Children at Inn-Circle who are enrolled in Head Start need to meet the Head Start health criteria, which require every child to have a physical exam and immunizations. Mothers can have their own doctor do this on Title XIX for a small fee or have the Well Child Clinic do it for free. Although the clinic provides check-ups and vaccinations, families need to have another source for health services beyond the scope of the clinic. The Homeless Children's Trust, another HACAP organization, provides emergency medical support to children under certain conditions. Mental health services at Inn-Circle are conducted by referrals and interagency case management.

Parent Involvement and Family Support Services

Inn-Circle has published a thoughtful and substantive vision and strategy describing its approach to staff and parents relationships. Its Community Interdependency Model is based on the assumption that, in addition to a loss of residence, homelessness is a rupture in the community:

> "What we're really trying to achieve is a change in the family situation, not just a change in the child. We see that the future and the fortune of the child is tied to the family and that we have to work with the child in the context of the family. An important direction for Inn-Circle, however, has been not only seeing the child within the context of the family, but also the family within the context of the community. Another part of the [transition] process is re-engaging families in the basic community structures."

Ultimately, the model aims to disengage families from public assistance and connect them to community-based supports by:

- Seeing families as interdependent citizens rather than human service recipients and focusing on functional goals rather than family weaknesses.
- Helping families develop relationships in the community and replace human services agencies' support with community activities and support networks.
- Encouraging the development of associations organized and governed by community members to meet community needs.
- Promoting inclusive attitudes in the community so that low-income families are treated as regular members in local organizations.

Inn-Circle's parent involvement approach reflects its philosophy of interdependence: the program emphasizes parent involvement activities, believing they empower parents while increasing the life skills, employment skills, and self-sufficiency of residents. Inn-Circle aims to provide parents with support services while also holding them accountable for their actions as Inn-Circle tenants. Parents are involved on several levels at Inn-Circle: they are integral to their children's educational programs and to the smooth operations of the residential facility.

Head Start at Inn-Circle has many ways to foster parent involvement in the classroom:

- Head Start holds monthly parent meetings in which parents participate in planning activities and helping to decide curriculum, budget, policy, and staffing issues for classrooms.
- Parents run some parent meetings themselves and arrange for speakers that interest them (both informational and fun-focused).
- Parents work with the teachers to write their child's Individual Education Plan.
- Parent volunteering in the classroom is encouraged, but not mandatory.

The HACAP Head Start director was concerned that at one point parents may have been systematically excluded from participation in the program:

> "In professionalizing early childhood, which was a necessity and a positive thing, we may have professionalized some parents out of the process."

He notes that initially Head Start at Inn-Circle was so committed to being completely developmentally appropriate that it was too rigid and difficult for some parents to volunteer in the classroom:

> "You can't hand parents a sheet of paper telling them what they can't do in the classroom and then expect them to feel invested in the center. If parents want to use flashcards, it's okay in the beginning. And then as relationships grow, the teacher can casually share information with parents about more developmentally appropriate approaches that may engage children in activities more effectively."

Thus program staff has worked to counter the impression that there is one correct "way" by actively encouraging parent participation. The HACAP Head Start director also believes in giving parents as many decision-making opportunities as possible:

> "We want local groups of families to view the Head Start center as a 'cooperative' and to give them early input into the type of Head Start model used, the hours of operation, and the division of roles between parents and staff. Families have a different perspective on a program which they help to plan and operate. They have much more of a sense of belonging, of being listened to and of being valued."

Parent involvement at Inn-Circle extends beyond participation in children's education to learning self-determination. The program recognizes that the homeless families at Inn-Circle need more than a home and access to social services; they need to improve their decision-making skills and sense of responsibility. Therefore Inn-Circle empowers its residents by having them comprise the committees that cooperatively run the facility. All mothers must serve on at least one committee: public relations, human relations, facility, parent/child, or budget. The resident council, which sets day-to-day living policies, is made up of one person from each committee. Together residents determine what changes they want to make and how to handle disputes.

Inn-Circle believes that many skills can be learned while serving on tenant committees, skills that are useful in the workplace and helpful in managing one's life. A recent project exemplifies the program's idea of community. A private citizen gave money to the program so children could buy gifts for their parents and each other. The different parent committees worked together to decide how the children should receive the money. Ultimately, the resident council decided the children should carry out some community service to earn the money. The facilities committee oversaw the various projects children worked on. The parent/child committee kept track of the points children earned (to be exchanged for money). The budget committee organized the disbursement of the money. And the public relations committee was responsible for publicizing the project in its newsletter.

During Inn-Circle tenants' meetings, residents and staff discuss many subjects. An account of a typical gathering follows:

> An Inn-Circle tenants meeting finds the meeting room crowded with parents. The staff has an agenda and issues that they want the tenants to make decisions on. There is the issue of snow shovels disappearing and the decision about what color to paint the outside of the apartment doors. The administrators want a warm color to keep in the heat, but mothers voice concern that their children would burn their hands on the doors in hot weather. Out of the large group of mothers, there are several who speak up often -- definitely not afraid to voice their opinions and obviously at ease in the decision-

> making process. The staff is good about calling on the more quiet women. Tenants seem passive about some issues -- they want the snow shovels to stop disappearing, but they don't necessarily want to be responsible for figuring out how. However, the discussion around door colors is more animated and the idea of children hurting themselves on hot doors had not occurred to the staff.

The Inn-Circle director comments on the value of the parents' role in running Inn-Circle:

> "In the past, we put skill-building with parents ahead of the concept that parent groups had important functions to play in our program. At Inn-Circle we used to offer traditional parenting classes that people came to, but not always with a lot of enthusiasm. We've become concerned that when we just organize groups of parents around perceived deficiencies such as parenting skills we risk sending them a negative message. Whereas, if there are also some very real and important functions for family members to play in operating the program, then we draw out and build on their strengths and skills. They rise to a different set of expectations about who they are and what they are capable of."

Inn-Circle also offers an array of services for adults. The program connects parents with tutoring, literacy classes, and GED programs at the local community college and Promise Jobs, the state's welfare-to-work job training program. Staff ensures that those who need substance abuse treatment receive it; they collaborate with other agencies to arrange mental health counseling when needed.

Some adult services are offered by the parents themselves. For example, tenant initiative started a self-esteem group. The staff encourages mothers to appreciate each other as valuable resources, to establish their own support mechanisms, and to learn to rely on one another:

> "If a resident wants a domestic violence support group, that's fine, they can start one. But we don't start one. There's a narcotics anonymous group that meets here that was started by a resident and it's now half residents and half non-residents."

Inn-Circle believes being needed by others and having a sense of belonging in a community are vital to self-esteem. Accordingly, Inn-Circle also encourages families to form community linkages and volunteer time in organizations such as the scouts, PTA, neighborhood associations, and religious institutions. Explaining Inn-Circle's attitude to reinforcing parents, staffers say:

> "Families should be given opportunities for growth that change their perspective on who they are, that give them additional skills in learning how to change their environment and really become more a part of the overall community."
>
> "One of our goals is to develop a supportive community within our parent group that really is a microcosm of what the community could be, ideally. But we are really working to eliminate some of the isolated situations, where parents are parenting in isolation. And trying to build friendships between parents and to develop that sense of 'we're all in this together' -- the village sense, that we're raising our children together."

Thus we see that Inn-Circle's Community Interdependency Model permeates each area in which parents participate, whether for the betterment of their children's education, the efficient and equitable management of the facility, or the services geared specifically toward them as individuals seeking personal progress.

Participant Opinions and Outcomes

The functioning of Inn-Circle forces people to interact and cooperate with each other, make decisions together, and see that their actions affect others in the community. The smooth functioning of Inn-Circle as a community depends upon the participants. A staff member notes that at first people came into the program because it offered inexpensive rent:

> "The impression was that we were the babysitters. The residents would come to the office for everything. And they don't anymore. They go to each other. When someone has a problem with someone else, they don't come to us and say, 'This person is driving me nuts, do something.' They go to the person themselves."

Where there may have been fights between tenants at one point, which necessitated calling the police called to the premises, participants are better able to resolve differences. In part this comes from the realization that each parent has a different past and sometimes it is not always easy to relate to others. A parent explains:

> "Everyone is at different levels... some women are coming straight from being in battered relationships; other women have been in and out of them and they're starting to get out, they're on a higher level of becoming aware of where they're at, why they got there, how they got out."

Parents are also learning how to handle other difficult situations:

> "Having the [educational enhancement/activity coordinator] liaison between the school and myself has been beneficial in a lot of ways. One is that I have a lot more communication between my daughter's teacher and myself. Another was my daughter was having problems with the bus driver on her route calling her racial slurs and [the liaison] went with me to talk to the head of transportation. If I went on my own, I am sure I would not have handled it very appropriately."

Comments by program participants reflect the personal growth that Inn-Circle staff hope they will achieve. People have been evicted for not helping to solve problems that were harmful to the Inn-Circle community or hurting themselves personally, such as not going to work or school, being violent, or, in one case, not keeping a boyfriend who kept destroying Inn-Circle property off the premises. Some families have left Inn-Circle because they could not abide by the rules -- and since returned. Now they are ready to accept Inn-Circle's stipulations without feeling that the facility seems "like a prison."

Inn-Circle residents recognize how the program has helped them be prepared to move on:

> "I'm getting back on my feet financially. That's why I'm here, and they're helping me, with a low rent and they help you find a job, set up a budget. If you want it [the program] to work you can really benefit from it."
>
> "They give you classes to build your self-esteem to where, when you leave here, you are able to go out into the community and function."

Residents like the program's emphasis on building self-esteem and establishing independence. One of the most valuable resources for the tenants is the emotional support of Inn-Circle staff, says one tenant:

> "I think the support of the counselors is pretty important, because like if you're having a really bad day, you can come in there at any given moment, and they'll talk to you and cheer you up and tell you that it's going to be okay and things like that."

The program also positively influences children's outlook on school and learning:

> "I feel my daughter's feelings toward school have changed tremendously. She now talks to me about the things she's doing at school, and when she gets a good grade on a paper she feels very proud of herself."

* * *

Inn-Circle's success shows that services for homeless families need to be tailored to that population to be effective. The program designed a support structure and set of offerings that enable residents to "get a life, not a program." In other words, they are guided toward self-reliance and independence. To benefit from the Inn-Circle program, however, the parent must be motivated -- ready and willing to make significant change, a state not to be taken for granted.

The Head Start component of Inn-Circle contributes to family autonomy in two ways: it helps mothers learn to be involved in their child's education, and it provides them with the opportunity to advance their own lives by giving them peace of mind and time to pursue their own needs while their children are under quality supervision. Just as importantly, the children have a refuge where they can count on fun, learning, and feeling safe and secure. The infant/toddler coop and afterschool extend that atmosphere to all the children in the program.

While the program gives parents the time to focus on improving their situation and developing requisite life skills through its broad range of parent involvement activities, it is not meant to be a long-term solution: it is a gateway to self-sufficiency within a community. The Well Child Clinic is symbolic of the program's transitory nature in the lives of participants; for, although the clinic provides check-ups and vaccinations, families need to have another health care source for services beyond the scope of the clinic. The clinic, like Inn-Circle, is a respite arrangement giving parents the opportunity to find more permanent, long-term solutions.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Staffing and Training

Inn-Circle's Director manages the overall operation of the facility and the Head Start director oversees the early childhood program. Program staff includes the following positions:

Head Start

- 2 full-time lead teachers
- 4 full-time teaching assistants
- 2 lead infant/toddler personnel
- 2 child care workers
- 1 child care specialist
- 3 family development counselors

Inn-Circle

- 1 housing coordinator
- 1 employment specialist
- 1 educational specialist
- 1 financial counselor
- 1 outreach coordinator
- 1 activity coordinator

Because the family development component is so important for Inn-Circle families, the Head Start director requires the Head Start family development positions to be filled by people with a Bachelor of Social Work degree or paraprofessional certification from the University of Iowa's School of Social Work. However all staff members, whether counselor or teacher, strive to maintain open dialogues with Inn-Circle residents: they pride themselves on being able to talk to families, listen to them, and draw out their concerns:

> "Open communication is the key to everything. We talk with them. Maybe there is some underlying reason or excuse or problem in their situation and they're reluctant to share it with us, but I think with maintaining open communication, we can sit down and have a complete discussion and it will finally come out why."

Due to the many HUD stipulations, Inn-Circle is rules-oriented, and staff need to uphold those rules in a friendly, non-threatening manner. Therefore Inn-Circle pays particular attention to hiring staff who can play the dual role of "supporter of family" and "enforcer of rules." The goal is to have residents feel they can always find a staff person to talk to. While staff members are approachable and will offer support without judgment, they also firmly but gently remind them of the rules. Says one staffer:

> "I'm on a very friendly basis with all the residents, and it's friendly in that even when they know they can't pay their rent, they're still going to come in and tell me.
> And they're not afraid to do it, but they know on the other hand that I'm not going to say, 'It's okay that you're not paying your rent.' They know when there's a problem, I'm going to go from friend to landlord and say, 'We have a problem and need to solve it.'

On the training side, the program focuses on teacher development. Inn-Circle tries to offer diverse opportunities for training and hands-on experience so that staff can move up the career ladder. The many training resources for Head Start teachers include:

- Head Start Bureau for management training.
- Cedar Rapids interagency community group for planning children's services.
- Grantwood Area Educational Agency's (AEA) class in administration.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conferences.

Inn-Circle's Head Start teachers fill out a form each year telling the director what type of in-service training they would like; teachers have required in-service training once a month. Periodically Inn-Circle invites guest speakers from outside agencies. In the past teachers also have participated in a workshops on child abuse and a session on resuscitation. Teachers are given the chance to visit other early childhood centers as well, gaining valuable exposure the methods of colleagues in the field:

> "One of the things that I've really enjoyed is going to visit other centers and seeing how their teachers have their rooms set up and how they work with children and what kinds of things they do... And in talking with them, I think that's one way I've really learned more than sitting in workshops for years and years."

Inn-Circle believes strongly in ongoing staff training, and several employees have moved up in the organization due to on-the-job and after-work education. For example, one of Inn-Circle's Head Start teachers began at a HACAP Head Start as a teaching assistant and, through inservice days and training, earned her Child Development Associate credential. Four years after she began, Inn-Circle hired her for a lead teacher position. Today, she still goes to training and attends regional conferences.

Funding

Inn-Circle receives funding from a variety of public and private sources. The largest, worth $1 million over five years, comes from a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The primary funders of Inn-Circle and Head Start at Inn-Circle in the 1993-1994 year are listed below:

Federal Sources:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Supplemental Assistance to Aid the Homeless Grant	$220,000
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Head Start and Child Care and Development Block Grant	$167,000
Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Funds	$20,000

State Sources:

Iowa Department of Education, At-Risk Program	$53,000
Community Services Block Grants	$50,000
Iowa Department of Education, Wraparound Care	$40,000
Iowa Department of Human Services - Child Care Development Block Grant	$35,000
Emergency Housing Grant Program	$20,000
Iowa State Emergency Shelter Grant	$15,000

Private Non-Profit Sources:

Inn-Circle residents	$60,000
United Way of Eastern Iowa	$50,000
Business, industry, and individual contributions	$15,000

In-Kind Contributions

- Kirkwood Community College
- Visiting Nurses Association
- Iowa Department of Public Health - Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)

This list highlights the fact that Inn-Circle was put together using diverse state and federal funds. HUD pays the mortgage on the renovated motel which houses the program. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds the Head Start component and has provided additional funds through a Child Care and Development Block Grant, which is administered through the state. Another source of federal funds that comes through the state is McKinney homeless assistance money, which is given to states as a lottery and matched by state funds.

The Head Start Bureau has been supportive of Inn-Circle and funds two of the three family living counselors. But the Director of Head Start at Inn-Circle has found it necessary to draw on a more diverse group of funding sources in order to offer the programming needed there. The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) contributes funding to Head Start through Child Care Development Block Grants, which pay on a per child voucher basis. Money from the DHS Family Protection Fund pays for Head Start home visiting.

The Iowa Child Development Coordinating Council gives the Iowa Department of Education (DOE) at-risk funds that supplement the usual Head Start services by paying for wraparound child care and counselor time, making it a full-day, year-round service. A second full-day year-round classroom is co-funded by Head Start and the DOE at-risk monies. The toddler and infant rooms use federal block grant funds. The McKinney School Enhancement Grant supports the afterschool tutoring program.

Inn-Circle is also supported by several private, non-profit organizations, including the Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation/Homes 2000 and the Homeless Children's Trust. A major grant from the Hall Foundation, a local private foundation, was essential in establishing a funding base. A time-limited grant from the United Way of Eastern Iowa provided seed funding for the establishment of the Supportive Services Team, which provides case management services for program participants. And together the United Way of Eastern Iowa and Medicaid provide funding specifically for the Well Child Clinic.

Collaboration with Community Agencies

Inn-Circle focuses on whole families, not individuals, which makes coordination with other community agencies especially important. As one staffer says,

> "We try to serve the whole family instead of just one particular individual. We try to support the whole family, and so to touch all the family needs, we have to invite everyone that's working with that particular family to a case management meeting."

Inn-Circle staff holds case management meetings with each agency or group working with a particular family and tries to deal with the diverse needs of the family. As many of the Inn-Circle families have multiple needs, the program follows a logical strategy: it collaborates to bring in services families need, to fill gaps in services, and to share limited resources.

The Supportive Services Team enhances the case management process by providing assessment of recruitment and helping families gain access to needed counseling, social work, and psychological services. The following agencies participate in the case management process:

- Abbe Center for Community Mental Health
- Area Substance Abuse Council
- Cedar Rapids Schools
- College Community School District
- Department of Human Services
- Four Oaks
- Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)
- Kirkwood Community College
- Lutheran Social Services
- Mercy Hospital
- St. Luke's Hospital
- Tanager Place
- Young Parents Network
- YWCA/Domestic Violence Shelter

Kirkwood Community College, for example, provides mothers with vocational testing, GED courses, and adult education. Inn-Circle purposely does not co-locate too many services on-site, because one of the program's goals is to teach residents to seek services in the community. Inn-Circle staff also helps residents by explaining the experience and perspective of homeless families to personnel of other agencies: because they are homeless, homeless clients need some services delivered differently. For instance, some of the Inn-Circle children have already attended several schools by a young age, so if a school has a policy of waiting a set period of time before performing evaluation tests, a child may never be properly evaluated because the family moves too often.

To date most of Head Start's collaboration has been with social service agencies, although the director plans to pursue collaboration with other early education programs. Using Head Start funds, Inn-Circle's Head Start purchased several preschool slots from local area prekindergartens of private agencies to encourage a mixing of children, so that they experience being part of a heterogeneous group. Head Start and the Grantwood AEA have a jointly funded position that focuses on the disability component of Head Start. Because neither agency could fund their own education specialist, they came up with a cooperative agreement to share someone in that position. Both programs have a role in serving children who have a diagnosed disability, and the linkage enables more to be accomplished directly through one person rather than having someone at Head Start try to work out each case with the AEA. The person holding the position works out of the AEA as the liaison to Head Start and makes sure all Head Start children who need special services receive them.

* * *

Inn-Circle' approach to providing family services balances compliance with flexibility; expectations with support. In effect, the program gives families "structure with room to grow," a model that parents may then apply in nurturing their own children. The strategy of developing a broad funding base and enlisting community support has been crucial to program success. However, as is true for most family support programs, finding stable and continuous funding remains its greatest challenge. Fortunately, collaboration serves to add to the resource pool. And, by cooperating with other agencies in the community, Inn-Circle demonstrates to families the potential to overcome obstacles through partnerships.

CONCLUSION

Inn-Circle shows, in action, how public and private agencies can share responsibility for resolving the problem of homelessness. The extent of collaboration and diverse list of funders demonstrates local community support for the initiative. The program's expertise in working out reciprocal resource agreements and creative funding plans has allowed it to deliver its services that promote the self-sufficiency of participants. Inn-Circle's brand of independence assumes interdependence; while residents learn accountability and taking responsibility for their actions, they also experience being part of a community that supports its members.

Homelessness is not an event. It tends to occur gradually over time. Inn-Circle is part of HACAP's larger strategy to provide a continuum of services for the homeless. For instance, although services to "almost homeless" families are generally outside the scope of the Inn-Circle project, families in this situation are served by other HACAP programs, such as its transitional housing program and a three-year Head Start Demonstration project. Inn-Circle is distinct in that it works with truly homeless families, with a goal to move families back into the community as productive, self-supporting citizens over a period of time. Undoubtedly, Inn-Circle's greatest contribution to Cedar Rapids is its community philosophy. The program strengthens families, frees them from dependency on public services, and helps them form community linkages that provide family support beyond the length of their stay.

SHELTERING ARMS, INC. - ATLANTA, GA.

"Serving Families through Child Care Services"

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Executive Director	Elaine Draeger
Year Opened	1888
Number of Children Served	833
1993 Budget	$4,367,000
Primary Funding Sources	United Way, Child Care Vouchers Parent Fees, Dept. of Education

POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- Sheltering Arms provides high quality child care services to infants, toddlers and preschool children from low-income and work families. The majority of the agency's centers have been reviewed and approved by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Center Accreditation Program.

- The program demonstrates its strong commitment to family support and involvement by employing a full-time family support coordinator for each center. This coordinator assesses the needs of families and connects them with resources in other community agencies, as well as organizing parent education programs and social activities. The agency also offers parents a range of volunteer, leadership, and economic development opportunities.

- Sheltering Arms has an innovative financing strategy: it blends funding from the United Way, parental fees, the state's Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) child care vouchers and Department of Education Prekindergarten Program, and a public-private welfare reform partnership.

- Sheltering Arms works to improve the quality of other early childhood programs through its IN TRAINING staff development and consulting unit. IN TRAINING develops and delivers workshops and curriculum materials designed to help entry level staff earn the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. IN TRAINING provides its services to Sheltering Arms staff and representatives of over 120 other early childhood programs in Georgia and neighboring states every year.

INTRODUCTION

Sheltering Arms is the oldest child care organization in Atlanta. It began in 1888 as an outgrowth of the First Methodist Church sewing circle, its aim to provide clothing for "street children." Today, Sheltering Arms manages a network of 11 child care centers located in Atlanta and six suburban counties. Sheltering Arms offers important support to families by providing child care up to 12 hours per day on a year-around basis to children of low-income, working families; in 1993 it served 1,583 children (via 833 child care slots) as young as six weeks of age to five years old. Children are able to stay in a Sheltering Arms center for several years, providing stability in relationships and routines for all family members. The full-day, full-year services enable parents to work or attend school.

Sheltering Arms helps families juggle the logistical and economic demands of parenting, employment, and other responsibilities; simply put, child care is a pivotal means of parent support. The vast majority of the agency's services, however, are directed towards children. Sheltering Arms centers guard young children's physical safety, help them broaden their skills and knowledge, affirm their worth as individuals, teach them to communicate and work with other children and adults, and prepare them for the world of formal schooling.

As more and more young children spend the majority of their waking hours in child care settings, the Sheltering Arms story has important lessons for policy makers and other child care organizations seeking to support healthy child development and school readiness. This case study begins by looking at the program's beginnings and family and community needs. Then we describe Sheltering Arms' services: the initial recruitment, classroom activities, family support offerings (including home visiting and opportunities for parent involvement), and parenting education and counseling. The agency also links families with other agencies and eases the transition to the public school system. This section concludes with participant opinions and outcomes and a brief analysis of program services. Next we examine Sheltering Arms' organizational strategy, describing its program management, funding, staffing, and the training it provides to its own employees and external audiences. The case study concludes with a look at the role of autonomy and flexibility in the agency's evolution and success as a pillar of family support in the community.

Program Inception

Sheltering Arms has a long history and strong tradition. A recent agency publication relates the origins of Sheltering Arms' child care services as follows:

> "When delivering clothes one day, Mrs. Dorothy Arkwright and Mrs. Dinda Patterson discovered a child tied to a bedpost as a safety measure while her mother worked long hours at a loom in the cotton mill. Determined to find a way to help these children, the women began to care for them in an abandoned railroad boxcar and later in the borrowed space of a bar room."

Current leaders of the agency refer to Sheltering Arms' early commitment to family support as demonstrated by minutes of "Mothers' Meetings," which were held to discuss child development and parenting issues. The agency has also had a longstanding involvement with the corporate sector: it worked to create child care centers in major cotton mills in the early 1900s. Today, successful fundraising from corporate sources and non-profit agencies bridges the gap between the costs of a high quality program and the income generated from fees paid by parents and public child care voucher programs.

Building on these altruistic roots, the Sheltering Arms program has evolved to meet the needs of children in the 1990s. The agency views those needs within a family context; accordingly, its educational and support services are directed toward both child and parent.

Family and Community Needs

Sheltering Arms serves families with young children in a variety of circumstances. The agency provides management services to two centers that are located in office buildings and serve children of parents holding professional positions. Agency records show, however, that in recent years the majority of the children in Sheltering Arms centers come from families with incomes under $18,000; more than two-thirds are from single-parent families. Thus, for the most part, Sheltering Arms primarily serves families contending with limited resources and multiple sources of stress, as noted by Executive Director Elaine Draeger:

> "Families are in such stress for all manner of reasons. Because of the economic downturn, there are just more and more families who need subsidies to afford child care, and who need the kind of extra family support that we give. We have fathers who are in jail, a lot of families with drug addiction problems, and some sites where we provide care on a contract basis with Mental Health for children of parents who are in treatment."

Parents say that a favorable child care arrangement helps them cope with other demands and meet personal goals:

> "I can go to school all day, and I don't have to worry about my child's safety. I feel safe, and this helps me battle with my studies. I get out of school at 3:15, but since the center doesn't close until 6:30, I can go home and study, get my homework done and dinner ready. Because it's hard to do good quality studying with two small kids..."

Finding a quality child care center they can afford is a high priority for families. In addition, it is important to feel confidence in the center and staff, as the following anecdote from a parent highlights:

> "My kids had gone to other day care centers prior to this one. At one center, the staff did not have enough patience. When my son was younger, he'd cry a lot and bang his head and my little girl saw one of the staff smack my child because he wouldn't stop crying. When I talked with the person in charge, she said, 'Jessica made that up. I trust my staff, and I know they didn't do that.' And I'm like, 'My baby's got a hand print in his face. How did it get there? Did it just jump there by itself? Explain this to me!' I talked this over with my pediatrician, and she told me to report it. The center was investigated and they're closed down now."

Thus, child care looms as a major challenge for parents who may look at their budget and calendars and feel overwhelmed. Sheltering Arms fills a void by supplying child care that is safe, convenient, and affordable. This allows parents to allocate a portion of their time, energy, and money to addressing other family and personal needs.

PROGRAM SERVICES

In response to the needs of working families, Sheltering Arms provides an array of services to both children and parents, leading one staff member to say:

> "In terms of family involvement, Sheltering Arms is not typical. Many child care centers our parents used to use are run as businesses. You take your kids there, they feed them and keep them warm and safe and that's about it."

Recruitment of Families

Sheltering Arms has a substantial waiting list of families at each of its centers. The executive director estimates a current total waiting list over 3,000 families, which represents three times the agency's capacity. Many other early childhood programs in the state face a similar situation. Georgia's welfare reform initiative (called PEACH for Positive Employment and Community Help) has a waiting list of over two years, and, statewide, 30,000 children are on waiting lists for the state's child care subsidy program. Because of surplus demand, the agency feels little pressure to expend great efforts to attract additional clients:

> "With our long waiting lists we haven't felt a tremendous need to market our service. However, we try to take advantage of free opportunities, passing out brochures or fliers in the community. We make sure information is in the health departments and clinics, at the DFCS [Department of Family and Children Services], or at career fairs. We also work with a program called United Way at Work where we go into offices and corporations and talk about child care and how to choose a program."

The decision about which children to enroll is based on five factors: the number of vacancies for infants, toddlers, and three- and four-year-old children; the availability of scholarship funds; the background circumstances of families on the waiting list; the number of open "slots" in the different public programs; and the need to balance a center's overall budget. Each center has a mix of children who are supported by state agencies (sometimes with an additional partial contribution from parents), children who are enrolled with a combination of parent fees and a scholarship, and "full pay" children whose parents pay the total cost of child care services. Sheltering Arms staff are trained to walk parents through the various categories of enrollment to help them find the most affordable payment arrangement. For example, the Child Care and Development Bloc Grant eligibility level is 75 percent of median income; the IVA At-Risk grant works on a standard of an income below $18,000 for a family of three; and Transitional Child Care and PEACH eligibility are based on a client's status in the welfare system.

Each center may also have special circumstances which affect the mix of families served and recruitment efforts. For instance the Summit Center is sponsored by U.S. General Services Administration and receives free rent and utilities in return for granting a preference to children of families employed by the federal government. The family support coordinator at the Summit Center describes the intricacies of her center's recruitment and funding picture as follows:

> "Most of our families have two parents working and I'd guess the median income ranges about $60,000 per year. For an infant they would pay $115 per week; or $98 for a preschooler. If the parent is an employee of one of the federal agencies in the building they receive a small discount, say of $15 per week on the infant rate. Using the

> Combined Federal Campaign donations we have given three scholarships a year, and through Sheltering Arms, we were able to award 21 scholarships, ranging from $10 to $30 per week discount, depending on family income. We have three families participating through DFCS vouchers. DFCS pays only $75 per week and then parents may pay the difference."

Amid a backdrop of such substantial unmet needs for Sheltering Arms' services, staff members need to be knowledgeable about the intricacies of DFCS funding streams in order to serve as advisors and advocates for parents. The agency's community education and family support director expresses concern about this problem as follows:

> "Our biggest frustration is figuring out how to help families work through the different requirements and eligibility standards for all the different child care funding streams. We fill out jillions of forms each month now to use the various voucher payment systems. We need more systematized eligibility. Why can't one family have one case manager for PEACH, AFDC, Transitional Child Care, Title IVA At-Risk child care, food stamps, and the child care bloc grant? Right now the different case workers don't even talk to each other. Even from a cost efficiency factor it would be worthwhile. For three years also our Transitional Child Care funds went unspent because families didn't know how to use the program and case workers were not telling them that they were eligible. So we would end up telling families or going down to the DFCS offices with them to help with the forms."

Classroom-Based Early Childhood Services

Sheltering Arms facilities range from the Osgood Sanders Center, built in 1923, to the Summit Center, housed on the ground floor of a highrise office building in downtown Atlanta. Classrooms in both centers are colorful, well-lit by large windows, neat, clean, and very well-equipped. A classroom for four-year-olds at the Summit Center includes a puppet theater, an Apple computer with a CD-ROM drive, and an aquarium. One area has tubs filled with items for learning and play such as snap blocks, lincoln logs, number pegs, geometric shapes and cards, string beads, puzzles, and a small wooden train set. The outdoor play area offers children a large climbing structure, a sandpile, swings and a slide, bikes, a rope net for climbing, and other attractions.

Visitors to Sheltering Arms centers find a variety of materials to orient parents and guests to the classroom program - a welcoming and practical touch. Posted outside each classroom are laminated pictures of all staff members, including their educational background, experience in teaching, and credentials. Parents also find charts outlining the major thematic emphasis for the week, as well as new activities and objectives for the day. For example, a center may have a "Frog Week" during which the Toddler II group's goals are to learn to identify a frog, make a sound of a frog, and recognize the color green. Large laminated charts are also posted in each area of the classroom, informing parents of the goals and objectives associated with that activity. For instance, observers learn that in the reading corner children are taught to handle fears and difficulties and feel empathy; explore roles and family relationships; recognize left-to-right and top-to-bottom sequences; tell a story chronologically and understand cause and effect; recall events and information; and recognize that symbols have meaning.

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Similarly, there is also a strong use of visual cues and materials for children. In a class of four-year-olds, for example, a large chart records 22 items that students remember seeing on a recent trip to the circus; another displays the numbers one to ten in five different languages. Classroom rules are posted, too, complete with illustrations to remind students that: "We build with blocks as high as our chin," "We keep chair legs on the floor," "We use scissors carefully," "We use pegs, beads, buttons, and beans with our hands only," and "We work out our problems using words."
The director of the Summit Center explains the basic strategy of the theme-oriented, activity-based classroom program:

> "When we were children, we did a lot of one-dimensional, rote learning, like coloring a picture of an apple and tracing the letter 'A'. Now if we do a unit on apples, we bring in apples and let children taste them, count them, cut them up, cook them -- do whatever, so they will not just remember that apple starts with 'A,' but also the tastes of different varieties, sizes and shapes, and how a Granny Smith apple is bright green. We have writing centers for children who have the desire to write, but we do very few pencil and paper activities. When parents ask when we will be doing the ABCs, I say we are working on them all the time! Everything in the environment teaches them about language. That's why we have labels on items in the classroom, so that when kids see a sentence with the word 'chair' they can remember the blue chair in our room."

A typical day in a preschool (during "Frog Week") might be as follows:

> Children pursue a range of activities in the classroom: they read books, trace frog shapes with magic markers, play with toy trucks, lace the edges of frog shapes with yarn, and sit on the floor on a plastic chart tracing the stages in the growth of a frog with another set of magic markers. In another classroom, "circle time" reflects the week's theme: the routine includes reciting frog songs, using a frog puppet in a finger-play, and holding a "frog" conversation. After a lusty rendition of a song about five frogs, children move to the activity areas. In addition to painting, blocks, reading, and housekeeping areas, there is a place for water play and a beanbag game involving a large frog cutout.

Along with orchestrating this range of activities, teachers talk with children about what they are doing to build their oral language and thinking skills, as shown by this segment from a group dialogue:

Teacher:	Children:
What are some things we've learned about frogs?	They hop... they eat...
Good observations! What do they eat?	Eggs...
Eggs!?	
	They turn into tadpoles and swim.
Do frogs swim?	No they hop.
	I can jump like a frog!
You can? What else do frogs do?	They have tails.
What are they called when they have tails?	Tadpoles!
When tadpoles lose their tails they turn into?	Frogs!

While teachers oversee these classroom activities which promote learning, they also devote substantial time and attention to children's social and emotional development. Based on her work in staff training, Sheltering Arms' director of training reports increasing concerns about the effects of stress and violence on children:

> "I am hearing a lot of frustration from teachers around the effects of stress on children. Parents are so stressed that they can't give children the time and attention they need and the children are acting out in school and in child care. Perhaps the only way that children get attention at home is through negative behavior, or children are picking up aggression from their older siblings or television. We're seeing more acting out of Ninja Turtles and Power Ranger characters in the centers -- kids who whack, whack, and knock somebody down or tackle everybody. It's very challenging for teachers."

The director of the Osgood Sanders Center describes some strategies which her teachers employ in dealing with these problems:

> "We work hard to help children work problems out using words -- to say why they're angry or unhappy -- which is difficult at this age. We try to use a lot of touch therapy and building a solid relationship with that child. When they're upset, we often just hold them and rock them to help them calm down. We tell teachers that the most difficult and frustrating child is the one that you've got to encourage by finding little things they do well that you can praise. We work with parents to find effective ways to guide their children without using physical aggression."

Another strategy used across Sheltering Arms programs is "primary bonding groups," which match each classroom staff member with a small group of students; this gives each child a specific primary caregiver. This idea was originally developed by teachers in the infant class and then extended to older children. A child's "primary" staff person carries out any ongoing assessment and leads the child's parent conference. The bonding groups also get together for daily language activities.

When teachers notice a child with a more specific or serious behavioral problem, they employ a variety of strategies to help understand the causes or antecedents of the difficulty and try different approaches to help the child and eliminate the problem:

> "For example, if a child is hitting or biting in the classroom, the staff will document when and where it happens over a period of three days and which other children are involved and then we sit down with them and look for patterns in the circumstances. Perhaps it happens frequently around nap time and then the teacher can try a different approach with that routine. When we run out of answers we can call in central office staff, ask for advice from staff at a program for special needs children and ask parents if there is something going on at home that we should know about. For example, we had a five-year-old who had a terrible problem of biting children. We did our three-day observation and asked the North Metro special education staff to come out and observe him here. Then I met with his mother and grandfather and talked about how we were handling it and how to establish some consistency with how they worked with him at home. It turned out that he was very angry about some things that were going on at home. One thing we did was to involve him in cleaning the room and having some special responsibilities within the group. And it got better gradually."

Parent Involvement and Family Support Services

A representative of Sheltering Arms' primary funder, United Way, remarks:

> "It doesn't stop with day care with Sheltering Arms. There are financial counseling sessions, there are efforts to help people with housing here; it really does try to embrace the whole family... It has a tradition of saying, 'We're not going to run away from the more difficult people to serve.'"

A genuine commitment to family support and parent involvement permeates the agency and is expressed through a wide range of activities and services:

- Two times per year, each center offers a seven-week sequence of workshops in the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) program, which deals with basic child development and parenting topics. In addition, Sheltering Arms is beginning to offer the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program through the support of the United Way's Success by Six initiative. PAT will involve a group of six families from each center in a combination of home visits, screening of children, and group meetings to foster more informed and confident parents.

- Parent/teacher conferences are held twice a year to discuss the child's progress, based on the teacher's observations (which are keyed to a child development checklist). Parents are asked their opinions of the program and how the child is doing at home.

- At least six times a year, each center conducts meetings for all parents to attend together. The meetings enable parents to voice their concerns about the program, hear presentations on topics of interest and discuss developments relating to Sheltering Arms. Topical sessions include tax information, training children to avoid threatening situations, nutrition advice, and updates on the Habitat for Humanity housing program.

- Parents can participate in workshops on life skills and family management issues such as job hunting, time and money management, housing options, crime prevention, and coping as a single parent. Many centers create informal support networks for parents to discuss common concerns and to share ideas.

- Family involvement includes a variety of social events, such as a Thanksgiving feast when parents are encouraged to eat with their child at the center, other holiday and cultural celebrations, birthday parties, spaghetti dinners, ice cream socials, and field trips.

- Each center is represented on one of five county-level advisory committees which filter information and concerns to and from the overall Board of Directors. Parent representatives compose half of the advisory committees, community representatives the other half. Meetings deal with issues such as fundraising, advocacy alerts, plans for expansion, and parental concerns about how their center is functioning.

Although all members of the Sheltering Arms staff work with parents, each center has a family support coordinator whose chief responsibility is to ensure access to family support and betterment. The supervisor of the family support coordinators describes their role as follows:

> "A lot of what we do is informal; being at the center everyday to say good morning, how are things going, good job -- or arranging for parents to network together in what will seemingly be an informal gathering. We try to link them up with the community; listing notices on bulletin boards about story hour at the library, Little League, a blood drive, voter registration, job opportunities, even where you might get some help for your grandmother."

Family support coordinators follow a systematic needs assessment process when families enroll children:

> "When we enroll families we try to identify immediate needs and priorities, for instance, connecting parents to GED or adult education opportunities if that is a goal. Or if they don't have a washing machine or their water's been cut off, we can help them with referrals to proper agencies. We also talk with parents about their strengths, dreams, and ambitions and how the whole family looks in a snapshot. Then we help them to begin to set goals and support them in moving from point A to point B, even if it's in baby steps."

Based on the family's needs and situation, coordinators work in a variety of ways to stay informed of family conditions and support parents, including visits to homes:

> "If I don't see a parent for some time I will contact them and go to their home to see if there is anything I can do. A home setting is more private, which we take into consideration if you're talking about a confidential issue. Sometimes I'll do the bus run in order to see the parents in their homes. One child had been in the hospital, and as I was going home one evening I decided to stop by his house to see how he was doing and ask his mother if there was anything I could do. I was able to help her think through questions she wanted to ask the doctors, and I gained a good idea of his home life."

The following description of a home visit shows the type of relationship that can develop between center staff and parents:

> Diane drives an agency van to the new home of Michelle Miller, a long-time parent at the Osgood-Sanders Center. Although Diane has moved on to a position at another Sheltering Arms center closer to her home, she has kept up contact with Michelle. Michelle's home itself is a prime example of the Sheltering Arms' family support commitment. Michelle has become a homeowner through a Habitat for Humanity workshop sponsored by the Osgood Sanders Center. By contributing 150 hours helping with construction, attending monthly meetings, and keeping up with a mortgage payment of $250 per month, the home will be hers in 20 years.
>
> Diane spends most of the session talking to Michelle while her two daughters play on the floor, liberally dispensing praise and perspective on the progress Michelle has made and asking about her current concerns and issues:
>
> > "Remember the goals you wanted to achieve? You wanted to move and you've been able to get the house; you've received a second promotion at work and you're now able to move from the night shift. How are you doing on the things

> you heard about at STEP -- remember patience and consistency?... I remember the first class you attended, you sat there and didn't say one word! How's school for your daughter?"

Diane's question about the older daughter's school situation brings out a variety of comments from Michelle:

> "I've had two conferences with the teacher and I'm going to set up another one. She scored very high on the Brigance test and they want her to go spend some time every day with the first graders and perhaps skip to second grade next year. But I've had a problem with the teacher in how she has handled my child's asthma. I told her to call me at work if she had an attack; instead she sent her to lie down in the nurse's office. She didn't handle it like Sheltering Arms would have. She needs to understand that that's not a judgment that she should make."

Parents comment on the personal commitment of the family support coordinators and the close rapport the staff develops with families over time:

> "Diane had this special bonding. I would even call her at home, working hours are over, she's not gettin' paid, but if I was having problems at home, I would tell her what's going on, and she would listen, and encourage me and give me ideas."

Based on their relationships with families, staff are sometimes involved in serious family situations which require rapid action:

> "Even though crisis situations are rare, we have run the full gamut of suicide, drug addiction, spouse and child abuse -- we see it all. Fortunately, the advantage of the full-time family support coordinator is to be an observer of families over time, to recognize problems before they become a crisis. Our staff are not therapists, but they are trained to recognize symptoms and know who to call. While we take a non-directive approach in general, there are instances where you connect them right away to services. It wouldn't be, 'What would you like to do, here are some choices.' It would be more like, 'This is what we're doing.'"

At Sheltering Arms, child care staff and parents have a common concern and shared responsibility for raising young children; motivations are strong for teachers and parents to communicate on this terrain frequently. Parents want to know what their child is doing and how they are doing as parents. Staff hopes parents complement the work they do with children in the classroom with supportive, non-contradictory interactions in the home. Parents often seek help from their child's teacher in understanding the child's behavior or in responding to problems with the child at home. Similarly, teachers often seek out information from parents to help understand the child's actions in the classroom setting. Most of the time these exchanges are harmonious; but sometimes parents and child care professionals may need to work out disagreements and conflicts about how to handle a child or problematic situation.

Parents voice positive opinions of the agency's staff and its parenting programs:

> "Basically, my discipline was spanking, and the staff said, 'Spanking is not helping. Find other ways to discipline. Take away the toys, or put him in the chair try things like that.' And they **hate** that! When I whipped him, he was getting worse. But if I tell Christopher he has to sit in that chair and look at books, he'll say 'Mama, I promise I will be good, I won't open this mail tomorrow, or I won't give you any more problems.' He hates to be restricted because he's a very active child, and sitting still for two minutes seems like 20 years to him."

> "I took the STEP course and enjoyed listening to problems and suggestions from other parents. The course wasn't someone lecturing to you and they provided child care and set it up in the early evening to be convenient. I've been in the child care field myself, but that background means nothing when you get your own kids and they're doing things which you don't know how to deal with and you're afraid you're getting negative and all..."

> "I was debating about whether to enroll my daughter in kindergarten -- she has a December birthday. I talked with [the director] and read some materials she provided and decided to wait a year. They try to direct you to resources that will help you make a decision, but not make your decision for you."

For their part, teachers appreciate the integral connection between their work with children and children's home environments and the advantages of close relationships with parents:

> "I think you can relate to the kids better when you get to know the parents on a personal level and develop some rapport. For example, we had a seven-month-old infant who was having crying spells and throwing up, acting nervous and fearful of noises. We asked the parents what was going on at home. The mom told us that she had been in a serious accident while carrying the child and that she was fearful that the child had been hurt. This information helped us show more patience towards the child and a more nurturing attitude towards the family as well."

Classroom staff at Sheltering Arms are also sensitive to the emotional needs of parents:

> "The majority of parents with children in the infant room are first-time parents. We take children as young as six-weeks old and you pass out a lot of tissues on that first day when parents have to separate from the baby. We tell them they can call us as often as they want to check on their child, and in the beginning that phone is ringing! One child had a crying spell as his mom was leaving and I looked up and saw her crying too at the window. Later on in the morning I called her to say he was fine and I asked, 'How are you?'

This positive atmosphere is particularly helpful when difficult problems come up regarding a child's interaction in the classroom, as illustrated by the following story from a parent:

> "I may have the only child who was in danger of being kicked out of a preschool! Steven began when he was two and he was having a lot of problems. His teacher was going to quit because she felt she had failed him. The director called us in and told us

> she was going to have to ask us to take him out because he was trying to push children off the top of outdoor play structures. They referred us to a clinic at Emory [University] to have him assessed and once he was diagnosed as hyperactive and having attention deficit disorder and put on appropriate medication, we saw an immediate change. I don't thing another center would have taken the time and been as careful with an individual child or with us as parents."

An example of Sheltering Arms' very personal style of family support is found at the Summit Center, which serves mostly middle- and upper-income families employed by federal agencies. While families here have few of the economic and social service needs typical of other Sheltering Arms participants, the family service coordinator and staff have discovered a substantial need for helping families manage the stress associated with balancing work and family commitments. The director comments on this issue:

> "We do a lot of talking with parents about reducing stress in their children's lives. Many of these parents work 10, 12, 14 hours a day plus a lengthy commute. People are on this board and that board and running to activities and it leaves very few hours to spend with their children. Often we try to say gently, 'He needs your attention -- you need to set aside some time to spend with him'. We try to help them understand how important their interactions with their child can be, because they're in group care a long time every day. We also have many divorce situations where children are reacting to stress and parents may be placing us in the middle of conflicts. And we have quite a few single parents who need a lot of support."

Summit Center parents also remark on the forthrightness of staff in dealing with issues of parenting and child development:

> "One thing I noticed when I first came here was the directness of the teachers. Michelle had been at home and I probably went overboard in helping her out -- doing things for her that she could do for herself. And when I brought her in on the first day and was helping her with something the teacher said, 'Stop that, let her do it for herself.' I was kind of shocked, but as I went along with her advice I became real happy that I did... They're not afraid to say what they think is right."

Linking Families with Community Agencies

Sheltering Arms' family support coordinators play a key role for many families in helping them gain access to other needed services and programs, which are often in short supply:

> "There's also a long waiting list for health services. Parents may end up going to the Grady Hospital at 8:00 in the morning and not come out until 9:00 at night. The Health Department is also backed up -- it may take 30 days for parents who need physical exams for their children."

Linking families with outside services involves a variety of collaborative arrangements with other programs. In some cases, other agencies, such as a battered women's shelter and a project called Operation Coats, which distributes free winter coats for children and adults, ask Sheltering Arms to advertise their programs. A particularly fruitful partnership has been established with a local housing initiative:

> "Last year we were able to help ten inner city families obtain homes with Habitat for Humanity. Habitat representatives have presented at parent groups and family service staff have helped interested parents with the paperwork and other requirements for participation."

In other cases, there are formal agreements negotiated for shared services. The Atlanta Speech School does periodic speech and hearing screening at Sheltering Arms centers. The Institute for Family-Centered Services provides workshops and family counseling. The Adaptive Learning Center, which offers programs for children with special needs from infancy through age six, also funds two full-time slots at Sheltering Arms. One slot is shared by two children with Down's Syndrome, and the second slot is used for a child with autism who attends Sheltering Arms three days a week and the Center's facility on the two remaining days. The Adaptive Learning Center has a grant from the Georgia Child Care Council which pays half the salary of a Sheltering Arms assistant teacher who receives special training and supervisory support in working with children with disabilities. The Center also will provide screening and assessment services for children whom teachers suspect have a disability or a developmental delay.

Sheltering Arms participates in several interagency planning efforts as well, including the Atlanta Project, an ambitious community planning and service project sponsored by the Carter Center and other civic leaders. The executive director attends meetings of agencies in one of the target neighborhoods known as the Grady Cluster and helps review needs for early childhood and health services. The Grady Cluster structure served as an umbrella group in coordinating proposals for the state Prekindergarten Program funding. Agencies affiliated with the Atlanta Project are now working to create a new health clinic in the neighborhood.

Staff people say that interagency mechanisms are helpful when they refer families for services:

> "It's very beneficial to know someone at an agency through these collaborative councils -- it makes all the difference in the world. Normally I may make two or three calls to someone's voicemail and not get a response. But if I contact someone I attend meetings with, they return my calls quickly because we have that rapport. And if you know someone and you say. 'This is a crisis situation,' you can get action."

They also note the need to stay involved with families during the process of obtaining services from other programs. In some instances, these situations involve substantial tensions for staff:

> "We have to be an advocate for parents, telling them what to say to assure that they get the right services and sometimes to intervene on their behalf. The agency that we struggle with the most is DFCS, which subsidizes child care for about one-third of our families. We have to help prepare parents in dealing with their staff and oftentimes smooth feathers over after they've been there. Some parents would give up the subsidy rather than go through encounters with DFCS offices."

> "We try to model respectfulness in how we treat people, but some agencies tend to treat parents as if they're not very smart or not very caring. It is frustrating. We try to promote our 'Let's find a way' attitude, but there are still some programs which use what we call the old fashioned way -- more punitive than empowering. Our coordinators pretty much know when there's no point in referring someone where they won't be treated right, so they'll avoid that setting and try to send people elsewhere. "

Referrals are often a reciprocal process, as is the case with the DFCS. In spite of their differences in style, staff refer families to DFCS if there is evidence of potential child abuse; Sheltering Arms gives priority access for child care to children from families involved with child protective services.

Relationships with Public Schools

A special case of Sheltering Arms' connections with other community agencies is its relationship with local public schools. The executive director describes efforts aimed at preparing children and parents to move into kindergarten programs:

> "We try to have someone from the local schools on each center advisory committee. We share resources back and forth in terms of cultural events and activities that children can attend. We try to schedule visits for the children to the schools they will attend. We make sure that our parents are notified about kindergarten round-up events. And we have a parent seminar where we encourage parents about the importance of visiting the kindergartens. We give them the NAEYC fliers on how to assess what's appropriate and what's not appropriate kindergarten practice."

The director of the Summit Center emphasizes a focus on parents as the key to successful transitions from her center:

> "I do a workshop for parents each year on preparing for kindergarten. I don't tell them who we're really preparing, which is parents more than children. They need to know what they're looking for and not just accept the school's approach. I tell them to ask for the curriculum from the school. If they read it and it's completely different than what they want, they can go in with appropriate questions. I encourage them to participate, whether they choose a private school, Christian academy or whatever."

In comparing how public school programs and practices compare with the patterns of Sheltering Arms centers, the agency's executive director states the view that kindergarten and primary grade programs are shifting in the direction of developmentally appropriate practice:

> "I think a lot of school systems are going to the hands-on approach. They're finally catching on that these preschoolers are very concrete learners, and that they have to put their hands on materials and manipulate them if they're going to gain real understanding and concepts."

Other staff members, however, are less optimistic in their appraisal of kindergarten teaching methods:

> "We sense that the kindergartens are more academic in emphasis. The kids are expected to know a lot. Retention is still a wide-spread practice. Here children have lots of freedom to choose activities and materials, whereas kindergarten routines are more structured. A former teacher with us is now working in kindergarten and she says all they do is dittos -- there's nothing which is hands-on."

The agency's director of training strikes a similar tone in her views:

> "I hear a lot of frustration from our teachers. They say in the schools they're still using sticker reward systems and putting 'bad kids' in the corner, or, 'My child was so excited

> about learning and now he's type-cast as a behavior problem because he speaks out and wants to choose things to do.' Some of our teachers will say maybe we should teach them to line up because we get complaints that our children don't know how. But in the end, you figure you just have to do what you know is right for children and hope they've gained enough self-esteem that they can cope when they get in with a teacher who doesn't do it that way. And we get a pretty good feeling that they do."

Another staff member points out typical challenges for parents:

> "Sometimes in a public school, parents get a sense that staff don't care as much because they don't have the one-on-one contact that they had with us. They see us at the center almost every day. If I'm gone or even leave early for a couple of days, the first thing parents say when they see me is, 'Where have you been?' They don't get that type of contact with the teacher or principal. But we feel if we get them involved in our parent groups and classrooms, then they'll take the habit of involvement with them to elementary school."

One center director shares an anecdote supporting her conviction of the importance of parental advocacy:

> "One of our children left here and the school immediately wanted to put him through testing for special education. He was going to be one of only a few black students in the school and they had already put him in a special class. I talked with the mother and said, 'You need to find out exactly what they're testing him for and what the process is,' and I prepared her and she and her husband went in and talked with the school. They were able to select his teacher and the school put him in a really good kindergarten classroom and he has done really well."

Another parent describes her feelings and goals for the transition to the public school system:

> "My daughter will be going to kindergarten in the fall and I've had a lot of anxiety about it -- not because I don't think that Sheltering Arms has prepared her -- but because I would like her to stay in a setting more like this center. My concerns are how we can help public kindergartens get more in line with programs like Sheltering Arms."

Participant Opinions and Outcomes

Sheltering Arms has a host of activities in place to measure program quality, document outcomes, and gather evidence of the impact of its services. Some of these endeavors are designed by and for the program staff; others exist in response to requirements of funding agencies.

The least formal kind of assessment is testimonial praise offered by parents for the quality of the work staff teams do with children and families. Some parents offer the "comparative consumer" angle on the virtues of Sheltering Arms:

> "This center has much better communication with parents than the other center where I had my children. In the prior center the children moved from teacher to teacher during the day, so the teacher I picked her up from was never the same one I left her with in the morning and she would have no idea what my daughter's day had been like. Here

> they stay with the same team of staff and the center has better written materials on themes and activities. When children are younger and not so verbal, that's important. We have a better idea if they come home in a bad mood, why they are in a bad mood, or what's happened during the day."
>
> "One thing I especially like is that even in the late afternoon, the children are still working on projects, not just sitting in front of the TV, waiting to be picked up. Teachers use a wide range of materials, instead of simply doing worksheets and having free play."

Parents also talk freely about the growth they see in their children's capacities, which they attribute to the work of Sheltering Arms:

> "For a four-year old, she really knows a lot. I went in our bathroom, and Jessica had made all these little letters on the mirror with a piece of soap. She said, 'Oh, mother, Miss Young taught me how to write my letters. I wanted to see if I could remember and I was brushing my teeth, so I decided I'd put 'em on the mirror.' Some kids get into kindergarten and can't write one letter! And, my gosh, I didn't teach this to her!"

Another sort of outcome parents mention is how the agency's parent education sessions have influenced their manner of interaction at home:

> "Every time Christopher couldn't have his way, he would spit, and when he did it to me -- I'm going to be honest with you -- I hit him in the mouth and I told his teacher, 'Miss Katherine, when he does that, you've got to spank him!' But she said 'Theresa, you cannot hit the child and I would lose my job, because we are not allowed to spank these kids. We have other ways which you should try -- we make him sit by himself, or if we go outside, I will make him sit beside me instead of playing.'"

Yet another category of change that parents attribute to Sheltering Arms' support and assistance is improving future prospects for themselves:

> "I was used to being involved in parent organizations at Sheltering Arms, so when my children moved into school I was just ready to stay involved. I wanted the staff to know who I was and who my child was... and prior to Sheltering Arms that never would have happened. I mean, my parents didn't go to my PTA meetings."
>
> "When people question the value of subsidized child care I like to tell them that I am proof that the system does work. I can't count the times I turned to my coordinator or the number of times she could read my face and know I needed some encouragement. It was tough to finish school, work during the daytime and take care of my kids. And when they first drew me into being involved in the parent organization I said, 'I can't do this -- stand up in front of a crowd and talk?!' But I'm now a member of the Georgia Child Care Council, appointed because we bombarded the Governor's office to add a parent representative."

A family support coordinator points out that the agency's procedure for working with parents enables staff to be aware of parental accomplishments and improved family functioning:

> "We use our family needs assessment system to continually document progress of families towards their objectives. We track children on a developmental continuum and we are trying to follow students through grade three in elementary school, chiefly through questionnaires to parents. We ask about referrals to special education, retention, how the children participate socially, whether the parents are involved. Part of our job is to help parents set goals for themselves and their family. As they meet them we help set up new ones, and parents get so excited in saying what they want to do next. We've had parents complete their GED, move on to technical school, or trades, or college."

The agency uses this needs assessment system to report annually on services received by families and family outcomes. For example, the overview for 1993 reports that out of 1,298 parents, 1,025 were employed, 145 entered job training programs, and 130 continued their education. In addition, the overview reports impressive levels of parent involvement in the program: 100 percent participated in home or group meetings, 98 percent attended parent conferences, 80 percent were linked to outside community services, and 60 percent volunteered at their center.

Families participating in the jointly funded corporate-government welfare reform and child care effort show positive effects of the agency as well: 34 parents are employed (with two receiving promotions or higher paying jobs), eight are in the process of moving from training or schooling into jobs, and six are in school. This type of data is an important part of the United Way's proposal review sequence:

> "Funding Sheltering Arms is a pretty easy answer if we can see the results. A huge part of their presentation to us is -- chapter and verse -- telling about their graduates, how many complete high school and how many get jobs."

Sheltering Arms also cooperates (and negotiates) with various of its funding agencies, which have different systems of accountability and assessment, on acceptable evaluation standards:

> "All of our funders want to know about program impact. They are also doing more monitoring and fiscal accountability. IBM has provided free training in Total Quality Management for all United Way grantees. We have meetings of all the child care agencies receiving support. We were charged with developing our own collective standards for quality. United Way proposed to use a pretest/posttest design to assess children's progress; so we went through a long process with them explaining the weaknesses of that design for young children. Our push from the beginning was to utilize NAEYC's Center Accreditation standards. Initially there was hostility to our proposal but in the end we agreed on a goal for all agencies to be accredited within three years."

In the near future a faculty team from Georgia State University will evaluate the state Department of Education's Prekindergarten Program, a program in which Sheltering Arms is involved. The evaluation will involve 17 of the Department's 170 program sites and begin with a baseline description of the participating children, families, and local projects. Then evaluators will track children into kindergarten and compare their progress through the third grade to a control group of children who had no preschool experience, assessing attendance, promotion decisions, teacher ratings of student work, and state-wide achievement tests at the third grade level. The evaluation will also look at impacts on communities and families and, among other variables, monitor whether program parents are better able to use community resources and track changes in parents' education and employment

Peers in the early childhood profession also affirm the quality of Sheltering Arms. As mentioned earlier, ten of these centers have successfully completed the NAEYC Center Accreditation Program, known as CAP. The CAP involves a lengthy self-assessment process, followed by an on-site review by a team of experts. Similarly, CDA certification of staff members gives the basic quality of classroom practices across the agency a stamp of approval.

* * *

Sheltering Arms' services are in great demand: when a program has a waiting list equal to twice its capacity and another list of communities requesting that the agency open additional centers in its region, managers feel that they are doing something right. What is "right" is the family-friendly, theme-oriented classrooms for children balanced by a broad range of family support activities and parent involvement opportunities. In particular, the efforts to reinforce parents with informal counseling increases the sense of partnership between center and parents in raising a child.

Sheltering Arms demonstrates the potential of child care agencies to be more than child development programs. Family support coordinators have an important role as advocates, organizers, and connectors to other resources parents need. And, while the agency contributes support to families, parents are an important resource to the agency, serving as volunteers, providing peer support to each other, contributing to fundraising activities, and serving on governing and advisory committees.

Thus the relationship between families and Sheltering Arms is both bi-lateral and multi-dimensional. Parents have substantial transactions with Sheltering Arms as a child care vendor and with the classroom staff who share their concern for the cumulative growth and daily experience of their child. Because young children spend so much time with their Sheltering Arms teachers, and because early childhood education involves substantial attention to issues of social, emotional, and physical development, the roles of teaching and parent overlap frequently. These realities place a premium on effective communication and positive relationships between families and classroom staff; having full-time dedicated family support coordinators signify the agency's belief in the child care partnership.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Program Management

Sheltering Arms has evolved an efficient management structure to support its network of 11 relatively small, widely dispersed centers. Each center offers services to 78-90 children, from infancy to age five. Each center has a site management team consisting of a full-time director, one full-time family support coordinator, and an instructional lead teacher (who also works with children on a full-time basis). In addition, each center has an advisory committee made up of parents and community representatives. The overall Sheltering Arms Board of Directors includes a representative from each advisory committee.

Having centers on the small side offers a number of advantages. Each site is a warm and personal place in which staff and families can get to know each other well; children come and go in a small-scaled environment, instead of a larger, more formidable facility. Favorable conditions exist for supporting staff members and high quality practices with children. Parents and staff members have ready access to center directors, and directors can readily view how teachers are working with children and each other. Teamwork between family service staff and teachers can proceed from a shared familiarity with children, their families, and fellow staff.

Sheltering Arms' central staff is organized to support the decentralized set of centers. While the agency employs a total of 222 individuals, the central office consists of only eight people. Below the executive director, who focuses on overall planning, governance, fundraising, and external relationships, is a small group of coordinators who oversee and support the frontline staff: an operations director, (the primary contact for center directors), a supervisor of the centers' family support coordinators, and a training director for the teaching staff. The executive director and supervisor of family support coordinators also attend the meetings of each center advisory committee to keep up on their current issues and share information. The executive director describes the role central staff has in supporting the local sites:

> "We have a team approach to supervision at all levels. We have an operations director who is the direct supervisor of the center directors who does site visits. In addition we have a set of mini-support clusters of three to four directors who are close together geographically, and the operations director and I do team meetings with them. At the beginning of the year we have a three-day retreat to talk about where they are as individuals and where they are as centers and we work together in setting goals and objectives. Then every other month they meet in different centers, they observe each other, and then they meet with [the operations director] and myself. We have the same system in place for family support coordinators."

The training director reflects on the implications of the agency's present structure in terms of her responsibilities for the education component:

> "When I first came here we only had three or four centers, and now we're about to have 12. So it's difficult to regularly observe at each site. I'll go out when there's a special concern, but the majority of my time is spent doing centralized training. We try to follow up our training, using surveys and check lists, to see if it is making a difference. However, center directors become the primary people who work with teachers who are having trouble implementing our educational program."

A center director describes the wide-ranging responsibilities of the position she holds:

> "My main responsibility is to make sure the center provides safe, quality care for children and that encompasses a million things. This morning my cook called in sick, so I was the cook. I hire the staff and spend a lot of time observing them working in classrooms. I've been in the classroom quite a bit lately to cover classes when staff have been attending training. Since I've been around so long, parents think of me as their confidante, so I listen to them. I'm out in the community doing presentations. I volunteer one day a month with the County Juvenile Foster Care Panel where I work with children. I keep up with the budget and maintenance on an old building. I help teachers order supplies and work with the food service manager on preparing menus and I'm often the bus driver and the bus aide. I have responsibility to keep tabs on our spending and enrollment, particularly variable costs such as food and supplies."

Funding

Sheltering Arms was supported as a private charity in its early years. In 1924 it became a founding member of the Atlanta United Way and for many years was funded entirely by the United Way. Today, however, Sheltering Arms' annual budget of $4.6 million comes from several sources:

- United Way contributions (31%)
- Parent fees (27%)
- Department of Family and Children's Services child care vouchers (18%)
- Child Care Food Program reimbursement of nutrition costs (8%)
- State Department of Education Prekindergarten Program
- A public-private partnership that provides child care for participants in PEACH, Georgia's welfare reform program
- Service contracts to provide training, technical assistance, and management services to other centers and programs (5%)
- Independent fundraising efforts (4%)

Sheltering Arms uses United Way funding to cover much of the cost of central office administrative staff. United Way funding also pays for a block of scholarship funds that make up the difference between income from parent fees plus reimbursements from public agency programs and the actual costs of Sheltering Arms services. The agency estimates that reimbursement from public early childhood programs covers approximately 60 percent of the cost of the care it provides. Scholarship rates vary from $10 per week per child for families earning above $50,000 to $75 per week per child for families with incomes below $11,000. These subsidies compare to tuition charges of $100 per week per child. Nearly 800 of the 1,300 families served by Sheltering Arms earned less than $18,000 in 1993, allowing them to qualify for subsidies of $65 to $75 per week. Thus the majority of families served by the agency pay less than one-half of the full cost of program services. Only 79 families had incomes higher than $60,000 and therefore were required to pay the full tuition rate without the benefit of any scholarship.

The pool of funds Sheltering Arms receives from the DFCS comes from a mix of different federal funding streams: the Child Care and Development Bloc Grant, the Title IVA At-Risk Program, and Transitional Child Care. These streams pay for vouchers to cover a portion of child care costs for families in a variety of situations, including participants in the state's welfare reform initiative, Positive Employment and Community Help (PEACH). Each of the federal programs requires the agency to establish eligibility for reimbursement through the local human service office and to deal with substantial waiting lists and paperwork. Currently DFCS pays $75 per week for full-time care for infants, $65 for toddlers, and $55 for preschool-aged children.

The Georgia Department of Education's Prekindergarten Program has separate application procedures, eligibility criteria, and service and staffing requirements. This program funds classroom units, providing from $2,500 to $5,000 per child depending on whether the program is part-day or full-day and whether staff members hold a Child Development Associate credential or teaching certificate. State funds must be matched by a 20 percent local contribution. The prekindergarten program only serves four-year-old children, and 70 percent of the students must be from families who are eligible for any one of seven public service programs (such as Medicaid; Women, Infants and Children; subsidized federal housing; PEACH; or the federal Earned Income Tax Credit) or show other indications of need. The Department of Education believes these eligibility standards allow programs to serve children from families with incomes up to 180 percent of poverty.

To obtain these funds, Sheltering Arms was required to work with a community collaborating council representing parents, schools, Head Start, and other early childhood agencies and human service providers. Since the city of Atlanta is so large, this advisory function was delegated to several existing neighborhood planning groups established by the Atlanta Project, an extremely comprehensive neighborhood planning endeavor sponsored by the Carter Center. Sheltering Arms worked with two of these neighborhood cluster groups to assess needs for serving eligible four-year-olds and to negotiate a plan with other early childhood agencies interested in sponsoring these programs. The executive director estimates that the Department of Education resources (estimated at $650,000 in 1994) will support 80 percent of the four-year-olds served by the agency, freeing up resources for the overall scholarship pool and for children younger than three:

> "We were able to get six sites funded during this phase one process, and hope to add four more in fiscal 1995. It came at a time when we were getting a little nervous because even though child care was a top priority for United Way, we received an 8.1 percent cut. Without the Department of Education funds, we probably would have had to either serve fewer children or adjust our scholarship scale and require parents to pay more than they could afford."

Another interesting partnership involving Sheltering Arms is a United Way initiative to connect corporate donors with the PEACH. The corporate contributions are used to increase the state's ability to qualify for federal child care funding: for each $1 contributed, the state generates an additional $1.67 of federal resources. The strategy is to have corporations donate resources to the United Way, and the United Way donates the funding to county human resource offices, which in turn contract with local child care providers. Total corporate contributions were $150,000, resulting in an added $394,736 in services following the federal match. Sheltering Arms served 53 children through this arrangement in 1993. The agency also trained 12 PEACH parents for employment; ultimately hiring four of the individuals and helping the others obtain jobs in other area child care agencies.

This range of funding sources allows Sheltering Arms to expand and diversify its services and reduces dependence on any single external agency or constituency. However, each program, agency, or funding stream requires Sheltering Arms to take a different path to gain dollars. Each path involves much more than simple proposal writing. Staff expend time and energy to learn about each funder's procedures, measure the agency's ability to meet formal requirements and to recruit and serve relevant target populations, and work to maintain credibility and strong working relationships. For example, the executive director comments on recent changes in the local United Way:

> "We've evolved in our relationship with the United Way. In the past they made annual allocations to overall agencies based on proposals. Three years ago they shifted from funding agencies on an annual basis to a three-year cycle of addressing priority service needs. They went through a major needs assessment process, using focus groups of donors and recipients of services. They also now require separate proposals for operations in each county of the metro area, so we do four separate budgets."

In addition to these major programmatic funding streams, a part-time consultant who is a former agency board member seeks out resources from local foundations and corporations. This arrangement generated approximately $350,000 in funding in 1993. Sixty-four businesses and corporations are listed as contributors to Sheltering Arms in its most recent annual report as well as 26 different local foundations. Private sector sources are relied upon in particular to cover the purchase and upgrade of facilities and new center start-up costs.

Sheltering Arms has succeeded in negotiating rent for several sites on a $1 per year lease basis and for construction support from HUD and other economic development agencies. The agency pursues this strategy for several reasons. First, some donors are more willing to contribute to facilities than to the operational costs of the agency. Secondly, ownership or no-cost lease arrangements free up funds now devoted to renting space (in 1993 Sheltering Arms spent over $250,000 or about 6 percent of the annual budget to rent facilities).

Sheltering Arms spends roughly three-fourths of its budget on staff compensation. The agency upholds staff to child ratios that are substantially more favorable than Georgia's licensing requirements for child care centers:

	State-Mandated	Sheltering Arms
Infants	1:6	1:4
Toddlers	1:8	1:5
2-year-olds	1:12	1:6
3-5-year-olds	1:18	1:10

Therefore staffing decisions and the ratios of staff to children and families have a major impact on costs. The executive director explains how the central staff allocates resources to each center:

> "In setting this year's budget, I looked at the amount of DFCS money that each center was able to earn last year, then plug in the likely contributions from parental fees. Then I begin to work with the numbers so that I get the maximum amount of scholarships for those families who are most at risk and still balance my budget. Then each center director receives their annual budget which we track on a monthly basis. We use a weekly revenue and enrollment tracking system so that directors can review their status compared to the budget. We make adjustments in staffing patterns and hours, or if a family is really in a bind we discuss how we can lower their fee and still be okay."

Staffing and Training

Child care and family support services are inherently social functions in which quality outcomes depend on the skill and dedication of individual staff members. Thus, while garnering and managing money is the most essential management function to assure survival and growth, the care and feeding of teaching and family support staff is the most crucial determinant of the daily experience of children -- and the most powerful factor in realizing the personal and social goals of these programs. Accordingly, the leadership of Sheltering Arms gives staff recruitment, training, and supervision substantial attention:

> "Sheltering Arms is good to their employees, they treat us as professionals. It's important to parents and children to have continuity in relationships so it's important for the staff to not be gypsies. We know the criteria for good child care is staff compensation, training, and low turnover. The training the staff receive keeps them feeling valued, gives them a reason to stay and helps them work better in different situations."

The agency has a four-tiered structure for teaching staff, beginning with teacher aides, who earn from $5.00 to $6.00 per hour to instructional lead teachers, who qualify for salaries ranging from $17,500 to $22,000 per year. This structure gives staff the incentive to participate in training and gain the experience necessary to move to higher level positions. Teacher aides are required to have a high school diploma and to participate in the agency's orientation and training. Instructional lead teachers must have either a B.A. degree in early childhood or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential plus one year of classroom experience. Family support coordinators and center directors must have B.A. degrees as well as several years of experience working with children and families.

The agency has created a compensation and support system which overcomes the greatest problem plaguing child care agencies that serve low- and moderate-income families; namely, high staff turnover due to low salaries and inadequate fringe benefits, which in turn results in unstable relationships for children and families and staff with minimal experience and training:

> "One of the wonderful things about Sheltering Arms is that people stay here. Our turnover rate is only about 8 percent and it occurs mostly in our teacher assistant level positions. We pay 100 percent of health benefits, vacation and sick leave and we offer a retirement program and a credit union. Most training is offered on a released time basis and at no cost to our staff."

This compensation scheme is certainly better than the average hourly rate of $5.00 per hour reported in the national study of child care teachers. However, it is still difficult to attract staff with certification in early childhood education. Accordingly, over the course of several years, Sheltering Arms built an in-house training capacity to enhance staff knowledge and skills. The training is organized around the CDA credential, a competency-based early childhood certificate widely recognized in Head Start and child care programs:

> "In the almost 12 years I've been here it's been very difficult to hire staff with teaching certification at the salaries we're able to pay. Either we have people who are almost overqualified in education but lacking experience with young children or they don't even have a high school diploma. So we've developed our own in-service training program that essentially allows us to take individuals with little prior training and within 18 months to two years qualify for a Child Development Associate credential. We also adopted the CDA strategy because we had a substantial group of staff who had been with us for many years. The majority of them had participated in many, many years of training but had earned no credential."

A center director comments on the benefits of the CDA strategy for her staff:

> "We had four staff doing their CDAs at the same time, and to watch them writing away and preparing their portfolios was impressive. The process helped them frame what they were doing in a more formal way. They can speak the lingo now to explain what they do and have confidence that they know what it means. It was a great, great boost for them professionally and personally. When they completed the process and received their letters, we put their portfolios out on the credenza in the lobby and parents came by and read all the information and congratulated them. Then they received their CDA pins at the Sheltering Arms Awards Banquet in the spring and had another ceremony at the state early childhood conference."

Working within the overall framework of the CDA competency areas and assessment system, Sheltering Arms developed materials and training strategies which reflect the agency's own philosophy of exemplary early childhood practice. For example, the supervisor of the family support coordinators notes that the teaching staff receives a thorough orientation to strategies for working with parents:

> "We do a training component for teaching staff on family support and working with parents, including the parent-teacher conference, dealing with difficult parents, parents with special needs children, how to facilitate a parent meeting, and the range of strategies involved in family support. We also do an adaption of the STEP program for teachers, which we hope will make a nice blend between putting these ideas in place at home and in the classrooms."

To reinforce the in-house training support, the staff operates within a supervisory structure that includes being evaluated each year. Based on an observational system, the evaluation instrument is used by teachers to rate themselves and their peers. Directors meet monthly with the classroom staff members to discuss their strengths and areas for improvement.

The agency also uses its experienced teachers as mentors for new staff members. A center director supports this notion of encouraging staff members to share their expertise with colleagues:

> "I'm now encouraging them to do presentations for other teachers. Belinda, who teaches our two-year-olds, is a fanatic with language activities -- we call her the Flannel Board Queen because she has a story for everything. And Brenda, who's been working with infants for 27 years, has many things she could share with other caregivers. I'm building this goal into their performance appraisals for next year."

Now that most of the teachers have earned their CDA, the agency is grappling with how to support ongoing training which will increase staff skills and effectiveness and enhance their career opportunities:

> "A lot of our staff with CDAs are asking, 'What do I do now to progress in my career development?' We hope to develop a way for CDA training to be counted as credit into a two-year program or into a four-year academic program. We're trying to build a personalized training portfolio for each staff member -- a way for teachers to view a total picture of training they've completed, what they see as their needs and goals, and what their directors and others see as needs. Unfortunately, the majority of our staff are like most of our families. They are single with children, and it's very difficult for them to get to college classes."

Sheltering Arms' director of training articulates a set of areas where teaching staff can use additional training:

> "Problem-solving, skills in asking questions, and being better able to truly help children deal with emotions are some things where our staff struggle a little bit. They can do an activity as planned, but some don't adapt creatively from the children's responses or challenge the children's thinking with questions as much I'd like to see."

Sheltering Arms' experience with training its own staff led to offering workshops to teachers from other agencies through its IN TRAINING entity:

> "Around 1988 during a long-range planning process, the United Way asked that we think about sharing our training expertise with other programs. We felt it could become a revenue generating opportunity for us. It has built up, along with our management contracts, to contribute roughly 5 percent of our budget. Last year we trained people from roughly 400 different early childhood agencies and schools. We have a contract with the Georgia Child Care Council to provide technical assistance with all their grantees across the state."

IN TRAINING services range from delivering one-time workshops to providing another child care agency's staff the full sequence of CDA training. In 1993 IN TRAINING staff conducted 39 different workshops serving a total of 675 participants. Sheltering Arms' director of training describes IN TRAINING workshops as follows:

> "Our training is interactive and based on the understanding that people learn in different ways. I may present a short, mini-lecture and then we will explore that same information in a video, or act it out, and we get into groups and talk about it. Teachers, like children, need to choose what their interests and needs are and have multiple opportunities to explore materials and ideas."

Another extension of the IN TRAINING initiative is offering curriculum materials which programs may purchase. The agency also recently began a venture to serve as a training site for PEACH participants. It provides professional development to parents who want to learn to be child care teachers and involves a six-month period of training and work experience. Following a basic two-week orientation, each trainee works one-on-one with a staff member and gains experience and feedback in areas such as classroom management, the learning environment, and dealing with children's behavior.

Sheltering Arms leaders are also participating in state-level planning for a more comprehensive early childhood workforce career development, training, and credentialing system:

> "We've got a lot of training going on across the state, but the quality is variable, and there's no way for teachers to build on what they learned from one workshop to the next in any sequence. We plan to catalogue what's going on, and look at the whole career ladder for staff in child care, Head Start, and public school programs. We're also looking at developing competencies for trainers and have a train-the-trainer system to help people plug into support they need to be effective trainers. And then adding better ways to evaluate the results of training."

* * *

Sheltering Arms has three features that make it stand out among child care agencies: its generous staff to child ratios, its stable and well-trained staff, and its commitment to family support and involvement. These positive circumstances are based on the agency's leadership capacity in fundraising, a nurturing approach to program management, and an innovative training program.

Sheltering Arms has created a complicated strategy for generating revenue to support its efforts. Establishing and maintaining this financial system across decentralized sites is a laudable accomplishment; but one is struck with how complex, precarious, and labor-intensive it is for Sheltering Arms staff to manage the demands of multiple funding sources. The central staff and center directors invest substantial time and attention to seeking and maintaining funding and to monitoring the different conditions and purposes attached to each form of support. Yet, as a result of its diverse range of funding sources, Sheltering Arms is able to provide more individualized and responsive care to children and families.

The agency's IN TRAINING unit is also commendable. It is praiseworthy that an organization is willing to extend their efforts to training others and family support advocacy instead. Sheltering Arms' team approach applies both within and outside the organization, fostering a partnership between families, child care centers, and both public and private community groups.

CONCLUSION

This case describes several elements of the Sheltering Arms organization which are indicators of innovation and success: its steady growth in funding and scope of services, its meshing of family outreach and classroom services for children, its capacity to help other programs and professionals through advocacy and IN TRAINING services, and its creative marketing and funding strategy. As expressed by the executive director, Sheltering Arms took a unique approach to program development:

> "Other agencies ask how we can afford to provide our range of services and level of quality. Our position is you don't design your program based on the resources which are available; rather you go out and raise funds to support your vision of quality. And you realize that no single funding source will do it."

Sheltering Arms illustrates the importance of a having an autonomous vision of program services and program quality. Many other early childhood operations appear tightly bound and determined by the policies of specific state or federal programs. The spirit at Sheltering Arms is one of professionals setting standards and the shape of services, in the mode of "build it and they will come".

One possible reason why Sheltering Arms can operate with this level of autonomy is the weight of agency history and tradition. Like many successful corporations or educational institutions, Sheltering Arms can center its present values on stories from its own early days. While traditions could at times limit organizational flexibility and creativity, they also lend a credibility bolstering independent action. Sheltering Arms' maintains its programmatic freedom, too, by garnering resources from multiple sponsors, in particular from community and corporate organizations. Sheltering Arms has succeeded in creating a "three-legged stool" of support for quality child care, comprised of public funding, parental contributions, and support from the local community.

THE PARENT SERVICES PROJECT - FAIRFAX, CA.

"Enhancing Family Support in Child Care & Early Childhood Centers"

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Director	Ethel Seiderman
Year Opened	1980
Number of Children/Families	15,000, nationwide
Budget	Average costs $300-400/year/family
Primary Funding Sources	Foundations, varied public agencies

POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- The Parent Services Project (PSP) brings the tenets of the family support movement to child care and early childhood agencies. Strengthening family involvement and services reduces stress for parents, helps early childhood teachers understand the home and family context for each student, and contributes to the economic and social well-being of families and neighborhoods.

- PSP provides an array of services, supports, and modes of involvement for families, to meet the diverse needs and circumstances of today's parents. Social events (with and without their children), workshops and classes on topics of common interest or need, peer support networks, involvement in decisionmaking, and gaining access to other community agencies and services are the core components of each PSP site, organized by a part-time or full-time coordinator. PSP also collaborates with local community institutions and agencies to help families gain needed services.

- PSP has evolved from a pilot program in four child care centers to a model with replication sites in five states, including Head Start, child care, school-based, family day care, and teen-parent forms of programs. Program development included several independent evaluations of the comparative impact of services on families and the cost-benefit returns of investment in this family support strategy. PSP offers strategic workshops and on-site consultation and followup to help agencies implement and sustain the program. An emerging area for program development is application of PSP principles and strategies in public school settings, in particular for families of adolescent students.

INTRODUCTION

The Parent Services Project (PSP) strengthens families and involves them in their children's education via local child care and early childhood centers. From its initial pilot phase in four Northern California child care centers in 1980, PSP has grown into a national dissemination and training operation supporting implementation in child care, Head Start, and public school-based sites that serve 15,000 families in five states.

The long-term use of child care centers is increasing, given the growing trend for parents of young children to work or attend school or job training. Parents and family members visit child care centers daily, building relationships with staff members and other parents. Based on these regular interactions, several early childhood leaders argue that child care centers should be sites for more extensive and comprehensive services for families. In their eyes, child care centers should be encouraged to emulate some of the practices and strategies of other early childhood programs such as Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and Even Start. These programs have strong traditions of connecting with parents by offering peer support networks, soliciting their help as volunteers, linking them with other community resources, and encouraging their participation in policymaking and advocacy efforts. PSP has taken a lead in this effort to incorporate such family-centered strategies into child care operations across the country.

However, for a variety of reasons, meshing a family support mission into child care operations is a daunting challenge. In most communities, the rates of funding from parent fees and public agencies create environments where teaching staff receive low wages, minimal fringe benefits, and little training in return for working long hours. Thus, the objective for child care centers to take on the additional responsibility of serving parents is often not only idealistic but unrealistic. A second factor hindering this aim is that working families are dealing with multiple demands and have limited time to give to voluntary activities. Parents juggling job responsibilities, commuting, medical appointments, home maintenance, spending time with their children, and other commitments are hardly prime candidates for traditional forms of parent involvement such as serving as classroom volunteers.

PSP stands out for having promulgated a viable program for overcoming the inherent challenges of incorporating family-centered strategies in child care centers and other early childhood agencies. In fact, PSP has shown positive results on several levels: significant benefits and outcomes for parents were documents in independent evaluations; anecdotal evidence from staff and parents speaks of positive effects on individual families; and, in the midst of a tough and shifting climate of child care funding, the program persists and has spread to a wide range of communities.

While the PSP strategy has been adapted to a variety of program types, this case study describes activities in four state-subsidized child care agencies in the Bay Area of Northern California:

- The Canal Child Care Center serves 40 low-income families in San Rafael. Sixty-five percent of the children are from Asian and Hispanic backgrounds and do not speak English.

- Campaneros Del Barrio, operating in the Mission District of San Francisco, provides part-day preschool classes for 84 children in a bilingual, Montessori program and sponsors a network of 11 family day care homes offering child care for working families.

- The Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center has a campus of wooden frame buildings (a former elementary school facility) in Marin County. This program services 90 low- and moderate-income families with children from two months to ten years of age. 55% of these families are white, with Hispanic, Asian, and African-American families comprising the balance of the population; 57% are headed by single parents.

- Parent-Child Development Centers, Inc. (PCDCI) in Oakland has seven sites located, for the most part, in renovated houses. PCDCI provides child care for 154 African-American children from ages two to six, 69 percent of whom are from single-parent homes.

We begin by looking at PSP's services, relating its classroom activities, atmosphere, and educational aims for children. Then we outline the range of family support and parent involvement activities, using comments by staff to emphasize the impact of these services. Following a discussion of program outcomes and a brief analysis of program services, we move to PSP's organizational strategies. In particular, we focus on the program's legislative efforts, dissemination practices, and relationship with the public school system. The case study concludes with an analysis of PSP's evolution, followed by some thoughts about what has made the program work and forthcoming challenges.

Program Inception and Policy Context

Each of the child care agencies in this case study has unique features and history, but their common origins are in the late 1960s, when state funds became available to support early childhood education and child care programs for low-income families. At the same time, the need for full-day child care grew as more (or both) parents began to seek employment and training. services for children.

The Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center, for example, began in 1973 as a community-based center with funding from the State Department of Education. It added an infant care component at the end of its first year, and gradually expanded to serve children from three months to ten years in a substantial facility leased from the local school district. Today a majority of funding comes from the Department of Education, but more than ten other agencies and foundations also contribute to the program. Oakland's PCDCI agency was founded in 1967 to serve the children of parents in a federally-funded job training program. Initially funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, the agency operated out of five churches. In the 1970s, PCDCI shifted to the Department of Education for its core funding and was able to purchase property in several different neighborhoods.

The PSP project was launched in 1980 through a partnership of the San Francisco Foundation and the Zellerbach Family Foundation. Zellerbach Director Edward Nathan convened an advisory group of mental health and social work experts to develop a primary prevention program for low-income families. The director of PSP explains some assumptions behind PSP:

> "The planning group decided to utilize child care centers as the entry point for preventive mental health for families who are highly stressed due to limited resources, or disconnected because they're new immigrants into the country. PSP would allow child care centers to provide social support services and activities. Staff would help parents get connected with the community resources that they need, and create peer support networks to reduce parental isolation. As parents gained skills and felt better about themselves, the belief was that their children would benefit, and the community would benefit from preventing troubles such as child abuse, and avoiding the need to spend more dollars later on to remediate problems."

To test the viability of the strategy in serving different types of families, the program was launched initially in four child care centers serving more than 400 families: two in Marin County, one in Oakland, and one in San Francisco. The foundations gave each center considerable autonomy in how the PSP strategy was implemented in each site. They also supported ongoing meetings among the local program coordinators to exchange experiences, problems, and solutions as they worked with staff and families. These meetings continue fifteen years later and include an expanding set of Bay Area programs that are part of the PSP family.

Family and Community Needs

Child care agencies generally serve families who are working, seeking employment, or participating in education and training programs. In contrast to Head Start and prekindergarten programs which provide a part-day classroom program for four-year-olds, child care centers nurture and educate children from birth through elementary school ages and operate ten- to twelve-hour per day schedules year-round, mirroring the working and commuting schedules of today's families. While employed parents may be viewed as functioning in a tier above families who are on welfare, the "working poor" families of PSP face a daunting range of challenges. For example, the director of PCDCI describes the families served by her agency as follows:

> "They are people that have high school degrees, many are going to local two-year colleges, but most are in very low-paying, marginal jobs. Ninety-nine percent of our families come from our own waiting list. There are other state-subsidized agencies in this county, but there is such a scarcity of child care slots that you'll find parents are on three or four different waiting lists and some are on our lists for two or three years."

An evaluator of the PSP program adds:

> "Their real life problems often include substandard or crowded housing, dead end, low-paying jobs, inadequate medical care, lack of English and cultural dislocation. Some of them don't have enough food to feed their children. They feel guilty about leaving their children to go to work, worry about their parenting competence, are exhausted by the endless round of work and child care. Their self esteem tends to be low; they often feel that their problems are beyond their control. Compounding and exacerbating all these problems is a feeling of isolation from other people, especially other parents."

A staff member from a local school district contributes these observations on parental needs:

> "Parents are very alone. You get up, go to work, pick the child up and go home. You're working 12, 14 hours a day. I can remember picking my kids up from a center at a quarter to seven, and there was nothing in me to talk to that child care worker that just spent twelve hours with them. That's not the ideal. The ideal is more akin PSP where a center adopts the whole family. To be able to structure ways that parents can simply talk to each other is a real service, I think. One of the values is breaking down the sense of isolation the parents experience."

Conversations with parents served by PSP child care centers reveal that they came into the program seeking a nurturing environment for their child and a service to accommodate their work schedules:

> "I was looking for a place where I wouldn't have to worry if I left her -- with staff people who loved her. I came to visit the center and looked at the other children to see how they interacted. They spent an hour talking to me about what they expected out of me and what they expect from their staff."
>
> "I had my child with a babysitter, but I found out that the sitter had a cocaine problem. Then I quit my job and stayed home for a while before I discovered PCDCI."

PROGRAM SERVICES

Classroom-Based Early Childhood Services

While child care serves the needs of working parents, PSP centers are also dedicated to providing stimulating and nurturing learning environments for young children. Visits to the four sites in the San Francisco area reveal striking similarities in materials and teaching methods. In fact, teachers in PSP centers share common aims, strategies, and routines with well-prepared and expert staff in Head Start programs and public school-based preschools.

A morning in the San Rafael Canal Center might be as follows:

> A group of about 20 Southeast Asian and Hispanic preschoolers stand on carpet squares in a circle. As they finish up a stretching exercise, a boy says to the teacher, "Let's do the Hokey-Pokey," a suggestion greeted with cheers of affirmation from his peers. The teacher readily agrees and guides and narrates the action as the children sing with gusto:
>
> > "Are you ready? Are you standing on your carpet square? Get your left foot ready! Is your right hand ready? OK, back on your square... It's time for your head; we did your head, now your back. OK, you know what? We need to use your inside voices. If we don't it will be too loud and hurt our ears. Now get your bottoms ready. If you're screaming we're going to stop... Be careful when you jump out, you don't want to hurt your neighbor."
>
> After the song and dance, the teacher moves children on to the next activity by asking them to sit down on the rugs and then giving those who conform fastest first choice at the various interest centers in another room, preventing a mad rush of children and forcing less compliant children to wait longer.
>
> The children are occupied at the interest centers while the teacher and a male assistant circulate through the room. They stop to work with or question individual children and respond to requests from them. Though it is a busy scene, the atmosphere is calm and relaxed with children shifting from one location to another on their own initiative. Two children are building legos; one sits at a table matching number shapes in a set of blank squares. Three girls work with cuisenier rods; a group of five at the water table wash dolls and dishes. Two children paint heart shapes at an easel; two others staple

> and tape together pieces of colored paper. A pair of children do matching puzzles on trays; a second pair plays with heaps of cornmeal at a sand table. Materials are designed for children to explore concepts in a variety of ways. In the math area there are more than 20 different activities, including jars with pennies for counting, outlines of hand shapes with the fingers numbered from one to five, and puzzles for children to assemble matching animal shape halves with distinct colors and patterns.
>
> After about an hour, the teacher draws center time to a close by flicking the lights and announcing, "Okay everyone, freeze. Let me see you looking at me. Boys and girls you have five minutes to finish up your work."

Similar routines and teaching strategies, with variations on the tone and shape of relationships, are found in one of Oakland's PCDCI classrooms. The PCDCI center is open from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. to accommodate parents who are employed. A large bulletin board near the entrance displays a variety of forms and announcements: medical emergency forms, a list of recommended children's books, a handout on disciplining young children, a list of overall program goals, and a chart showing the parents assigned to do laundry on a rotating basis each week.

> Circle time includes some school-like routines: children recite the Pledge of Allegiance, sing "My Country 'Tis of Thee," and then salute the African-American flag. The teacher takes attendance, announcing each child's full name and waiting to hear "present." A Show-and-Tell period includes a stream of comments and actions by the teacher directed at behavior management:
>
>> "I need everyone's attention... Please raise your hands and be quiet..Everyone stand up and hold hands... Now, sit on your bottoms with your legs crossed... Put what you have to share behind your back... Excuse me, David, have a seat... Please take your feet off of her, she's asked you three times... Excuse me, your hands belong to you and you should keep them to yourself... You need to go sit next to Ms. Linda..."
>
> Rather than allowing children to select their own activities and partners, the PCDCI class is divided into stable groups. One crew is assigned to outdoor play, while the remaining two groups vote for story time with the teacher, painting butterfly shapes with the teacher aide, or working with playdough at a table in an adjoining room.
>
> The teacher's reading of The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs illustrates how she leads her children in the learning process. This book, which depicts the wolf's side of the story, assumes prior knowledge of the standard version of this tale. When a tussle breaks out between two boys, the teacher interrupts her reading and deftly connects the story to the children's immediate experience: "What's wrong?... See, just like in this book there are two sides to the story." Later she asks if the children realize that people eat pigs in the form of pork or ham and inquires, "If a wolf knocked on your door, would you answer? If anyone you don't know knocks on your door will you open it?" She also interjects questions as she reads the book aloud to keep the children's attention and see how they interpret the narrative: "Now the second pig built his house a little bit smarter. What material did he use? Ooh you're smart!" She concludes this activity asking, "Who's telling the truth do you think?" prompting several responses and a vote among the group. The majority side with the pigs' version of events, rather than this account's stance which argues that the wolf was "framed."

This example of how a teacher and children experience a book together shows that preschool children can engage in a sophisticated comparison of different versions of a narrative. Children also gain experience in the fundamental social skills of cooperating with a relatively sizeable group of peers and responding to the guidance and direction of a non-parental adult. They learn to wait their turn, listen to directions, respond to questions, follow a sequence of steps in a group activity, and share materials and the attention of grownups with peers. The PSP centers prepare children for the kindergarten and primary grade curricula: children gain familiarity and experience in working with numbers, letters, shapes, and colors; use pencils, books, and art materials; and with simple tools begin to explore science, mathematics, and reading.

Parent Involvement and Family Support Services

The PSP approach to serving parents is frequently described as a smorgasbord, offering a wide range of activities to engage parents. Specific activities and services reflect the needs of parents at each site, including:

- Family fun activities
- "Adult-only" social activities
- Workshops and classes
- Peer support networks
- Empowerment opportunities
- Respite care and sick child care
- Assistance in obtaining services for varied family needs

Each PSP center offers many activities each month, providing options intended to meet the interests and schedules of individual parents. For example, in one month the Canal Center offered ten ESL workshops, a family movie night, a planning meeting for the parent advisory group, a day-long retreat for parents at a near-by college, and respite care on one weekend. Inherent in these activities is the overarching aim of relieving stress by following the strategies and tenets of the family support movement:

- Build on the strengths of families
- Create a social support network among families
- Work with parents in ways which increase their capacity to solve their own problems and to feel empowered

The PSP model includes identifying a lead staff person at each center plan and carry out the parent component of the program. Some agencies have hired full-time family service coordinators, while others have added this responsibility to existing staff. The next section describes the diversity of services oriented toward parents, highlights some variations in how different centers have implemented the PSP program, and reports staff impressions of parents' development in response to being active participants. A strong theme in these accounts is how parent involvement in one activity builds relationships which lead to other forms of engagement and support.

PSP tries to assist parents in reducing stress and building a support network by providing recreational outlets and social interaction:

> "Activities seem to evolve with each group of parents. This year, families want to be with their children. So instead of parent retreats which we supported in past years, we take trips for parents and children together. Last Sunday we took 22 families to a nearby Zen Center and beach for a picnic. We've gone to plays that were staged in San Francisco, the Ice Capades, basketball and baseball games. Other centers took families to Fairy Land, or to the movies and then for pizza with their children."

> "Some Hmoung parents did a workshop on hand-painting silk and wool material. As we worked we talked together -- one parent who had been laid off shared that she felt she had been thrown away. After listening to her we were able to refer her to a mental health center. The staff benefit from these as much as parents. Sometimes you get so busy, it can be a real downer on your soul. For me, sewing and embroidery help me cope."

Each center also offers educational activities based on interests expressed by parents. The center identifies people who can give the classes and provides space, refreshments, and child care to make participation easy for families. At the Campaneros Del Barrio center in San Francisco's Mission District, sessions focus on helping recent immigrant families cope with the challenges of adjusting to a new culture and economy. The center offers English classes and workshops covering many topics, such as computers, plumbing, catering, and Spanish literature. Parents themselves conduct many of the workshops. Some classes have led to economic development efforts, such as a quilting cooperative which now sells its products at local crafts fairs and recently opened a store front gallery in their neighborhood.

The director of PCDCI says the workshop/class component provides two tiers of benefits at the center. Workshops and classes meet parents' immediate educational needs and foster their interests, and they have the potential to uncover personal problems which may require more intensive support:

> "Because many of our families live in neighborhoods where there's a lot of drug and crime activities, they wanted to concentrate on mental health, stress reduction, and survival skills. For example, holidays are often a downer if parents don't have money and aren't able to meet expectations of their children. We had a facilitator lead a session, 'Dealing with the Holiday Blues.' This session brought out a big crowd, so individual parents weren't under a spotlight. Later on we were able to move into more intimate topics in smaller groups. We later had a call from a father who asked if we could help him and his wife. We agreed to pay for the first hour of private marital counseling and then were able to refer them to a local counseling agency which offers services on a sliding fee scale."

While staff members play a lead role in planning and facilitating PSP services, the program also has explicit goals of helping parents help each other, as revealed in the following anecdotes:

> "We serve a wide range of immigrant families from Ethiopia, Viet Nam, Mexico. Initially we were carting people to activities and conferences, but we noticed that no one would sit with each other. So we began to ask how can we connect people? We started a monthly cooking and gardening group. We found our Asian parents smelling tortillas for the first time in their lives; people talked about how they used the same herbs in different ways. We would have each parent tell how they came to live in San Rafael. We started to see people talking, sharing rides, developing friendships. We found children

> going to each other's birthday parties; there are eight-year-olds still playing with the friends they met here in preschool."
>
> "I recall one parent who came in exhausted and crying to a session. She had been battered and she was taking it out on her children. We did some role-playing with her and the other parents jumped all over her. They were much tougher on her than I would have been as a professional. They gave her an assignment to check out some financial aid related to her plans for schooling. One parent volunteered to babysit for her child while she went for the session. And they said, 'Don't come back until you've completed this!'"
>
> "We have a Fathers' Breakfast regularly where we cook and eat breakfast with the kids for the first hour, then have child care so the men can talk. We have a good time, complaining and sharing concerns about kids, wives, bosses, government. Men are often hesitant to get involved with groups like this because it implies that you need some help, some companionship that you can't get somewhere else. Of course that's true for a lot of us, but it's hard to draw men in."

PSP provides decisionmaking opportunities at various levels for parents. Parent Leadership Committees in each site seek input from parents, help resolve conflicts and set policies on program operations. Parents are invited to help plan what activities they want at their center; they even conduct some of the activities themselves. Another way that PSP builds parental skills and responsibility is through management of a small discretionary budget at each center:

> "There was a parent options fund, which the foundation encouraged us to set aside for parents to administer. So often for families that don't have financial resources at their disposal, the suspicion is that when you give them an opportunity to determine how money is spent, they'll go out and spend it on frivolous things. It was not the case. The Canal Center set up a $2,000 revolving loan fund which parents could apply to, for needs such as car repairs, fixing plumbing or buying school clothes, and after 10 years we still had $1,800. They found that parents would pay back their obligations even if their child had left the center years ago."

Parents are also involved in deciding how they want to contribute support to the initiative. Parents at the Campaneros site, for example, have raised $5,000 for their center each year.

Linking Families with Community Agencies

Centers vary in their capacity to help families with those needs beyond child care that are unmet by direct PSP activities. All centers offer respite child care on weekends and for emergencies, and some provide special support for sick child care so that parents do not have to leave their jobs to take care of their children when they are mildly ill. Some sites, such as the Canal Center, have obtained additional funding to provide after-school tutoring for older children and an Even Start program to help parents with literacy and GED training.

Due to its sponsorship by a community-based organization, Campaneros Del Barrio has six other agencies co-located in its center, including a reading clinic. This agency is beginning a relationship with a legal services clinic targeted at Central American immigrants. In general, however, PSP makes an effort to refer families to other community agencies which can provide free or affordable services:

> "When a parent seeks to get their child enrolled, they go through the health screening process -- which includes your immunization, your annual check up with a doctor. Then we try to link up families with programs that do screening for vision, dental, speech and hearing when they're available free of charge. Many of our families are AFDC recipients so they receive MediCal. Referrals are made for those families that don't have some type of insurance; doctors may be help them as an in-kind contribution. However, those services are slowly, slowly dwindling away."

The local PSP coordinator plays an important role in this referral strategy. In addition to providing basic information on where families can turn for assistance, this staff person is frequently able to mediate the contacts between parents and other programs:

> "When we find out about a need, we try to connect families with the right agency. For example, Tuesday a parent came to me and asked, 'What's a resume?' and then, 'What's this job in the newspaper?' and I was able to help her directly. Another person came and threw her income tax form in my face and said, 'You call them; I haven't received my refund yet.' It turned out that she was afraid her English wasn't good enough to be confident in talking with the IRS. So I made a bargain, saying, 'I'll make the call and stay on the line, if you do the talking.' Or they'll be interested in a literacy program but they're not ready to make a contact themselves without support."

However, a growing problem in working with other agencies is the limited availability of services for children and families. As a school administrator argues:

> "Fifteen years ago, we had regional mental health centers, with child and family therapists, all over the county and now they're gone. Principals and teachers become the de facto counselors for the kids. And so I scramble now, wondering how can this family get support? We can hook them up sometimes to an agency, but the time frame that they can work with them are short, and the journey to get services is lengthy and cumbersome."

The different PSP family support services and parent involvement activities overlap with each other: ongoing events help build relationships which lead to parents learning to be resources for each other and sharing personal needs among themselves and the staff. The staff grows in its understanding of the families they support, making it easier to reach out and extend help. PSP Director Ethel Seiderman ties some of these threads together:

> "Some of what we do is fun and classes, but you see, it's the whole gestalt. Because we're having a warm casual conversation with a parent in a corner during a social event, it makes it possible to confront harder issues at other times. For example, about a month ago, we smelled liquor on the breath of one of our mothers who was recovering from alcoholism. Because of the kind of relationship we have with her, we were able to confront her and get her assistance through a county agency."

Participant Opinions and Outcomes

Unlike many early childhood initiatives, PSP has been the subject of a formal evaluation of its impact on families through a three-year study sponsored by the San Francisco and Marin Community Foundations. The evaluation design involved interviews with 169 parents in 20 different PSP sites and a control group of 86 similar parents involved in child care centers that were not participating in PSP. Two cohorts of parents from each center were interviewed at fifteen-month intervals over the course of the evaluation. Questionnaires included examination of psychological symptoms, breadth and depth of social support, and frequency of stressful "life events" such as divorce or financial difficulties. The evaluation conceptualized PSP as a social support strategy for highly stressed and socially isolated parents. The evaluators further analyzed to what degree PSP services provide effectual, informational, and emotional forms of support. According to the evaluation:

> "The PSP program is effective in reducing parents' [psychological] symptom levels in the short term and preventing symptoms development on a longer-term basis. This symptom reduction promotes parent empowerment and health family functioning."
>
> "Forty-six percent of PSP and 52 percent of control group parents would probably be diagnosed as psychiatric cases at the beginning of the study... By interview 2, the picture has changed considerably for the PSP group, but there has been very little change in the control group... In the last 15 months of the study, the PSP group stabilized at a relatively low level of symptoms, while the control group increased dramatically in symptoms."

PSP has also worked with two other evaluators to examine the economic benefits of its program and the effectiveness of its training services. Paul Harder of the URSA Institute in San Francisco concluded that PSP services lead to an average savings of $240 per family for the state of California. Consultant Molly Haggard, looking at sites where PSP was set up in 1989 and 1990, found positive effects in the skills and attitudes of staff members and "dramatic increases in parent attendance and involvement in activities."

Parents and staff add their endorsements to these reports in their comments about the program. Parents emphasize the positive reactions of their children, their own growing knowledge of how to work with their children at home, and their aspirations for their children to be prepared when they enter the public schools:

> "My daughter is always excited and tells me stories about her day."
>
> "I've learned about not giving up. This program gives you lots of encouragement, rather than blaming you. You learn that the staff is going to keep on coming at you with support and suggestions."
>
> "You get to us and we get to our children."
>
> "PSP helped my daughter to be ready for kindergarten and helped me to be ready to be involved."

Staff members express praise and respect for parents:

> "Other parents can be best in drawing in those people that are standing out there or are so stressed that they don't feel they can do another thing. And once they come in, they're hooked. I recall a woman who said, 'I can't speak in public, and don't ask me to call other parents,' but who became one of the best leaders I've ever had. We wanted to publish a directory of parents and several families were unwilling to list their numbers and addresses

> but she was determined to make it a success. She called every parent before meetings to urge them to attend."
>
> "One mom came to us years ago, on AFDC following a divorce. She wanted to go back to school but she had no way to pay for child care. She completed training and became a real estate appraiser. She served as a board member for nearly 11 years and never missed a single meeting. She also become a strong advocate on other community issues."
>
> "Parents meeting with each other, having a buddy, to call each other when they get stuck and feel like they're not making the best judgements... having someone just be a good listener is what we're working on. And I'm seeing parents, because they're learning how to be good listeners to each other, parents then translate that to their children. That's a simple little piece but it's so important in relationships, when you're feeling like the world is falling down."

Another endorsement comes from the local superintendent of schools:

> "What I've seen over 20 years is the Center being a place where parents can go and connect with advocates. These were usually parents that did not always have the economic advantages of other people in Marin had. They learned how to access and use the system around them; and some of them grew into real leaders. Here's a person that was a burden on society, and now finally they're learning how to get what they need to go ahead and elevate themselves into productive human beings. I can think of some of the young kids that came in as high school drop outs with babies and, under [the director's] tutorage, learned how to take care of their kids, how to care for themselves, and how to develop a positive self-concept they could reflect that back to the children."

Staff members also mention how adding PSP services has improved their approach to teaching, because their involvement with parents has deepened their knowledge and understanding of the families they serve:

> "What's nice is that you can get to know families very well if they have several children at the center. Often important things don't come out when people fill out the entrance form. We've heard stories from one family from El Salvador where their dad was tortured by soldiers. They have learned a very different set of survival skills than most families in the U.S. So we need to explain about how surviving in America may involving asking for help from people in authority. We've learned that Vietnamese families have a tradition of placing hot coins on children' bodies when they are ill. They believe healing won't work unless the coin leaves a black and blue mark -- so this raises issues for teachers trained to look for evidence of child abuse. They also aren't used to our ideas of disciplining children without hitting them -- they say American parents are too lenient. Some African-born parents won't seek marriage counseling because they see these problems as confidential. We work on helping parents become more comfortable in seeking help."
>
> "Trying to meet the needs of children and parents simultaneously is hard, especially when those needs may be in conflict. It's difficult for staff to make appropriate judgements, particularly when they see the child every day, but may not be hearing the parent's side of the story. Our parent coordinator built relationships over time in a natural way with parents. Then she began to contribute from the parent's point of view

> and situation in our conferences to discuss individual children. It helped us to become more understanding and less adversarial in working with families. Now we are more likely to appreciate that if Johnny has a hard day it may be because Mom didn't get home until 2:00 in the morning, or because he's staying with an older sister and isn't seeing mom as much as he would like. Or, if this mother had a crisis in her family over the weekend and there was violence, you'd better understand not only the behavior of the child but sometimes the behavior of the mother."

* * *

PSP has multiple positive effects on participants. PSP makes a difference in the lives of families and in the perspectives and work of child care professionals. For families, PSP provides a focal point for social support from peers and professional staff; a host of social, educational, and recreational activities; and modest help in connecting with other community agencies and services. It transforms the atmosphere of a child care center into a place which includes them, takes their needs seriously, and creates many opportunities for them to get to know the people who care for their children. This investment pays off in reducing stress; in developing specific life skills and reducing dependency on public services; and in preventing families from falling into a downward cycle of problems, internal conflicts, and disintegration.

PSP also provides a new window for child care professionals to learn about families' strengths, talents, and culture, as well as their needs and problems. Teachers can use this knowledge to understand children in a richer, more accurate manner, interpreting their behavior, language, work and relationships in light of their home environment. PSP shifts classroom practices, staff perspectives, and the climate of centers in a more family-friendly, family-responsive direction. PSP provides an important positive vehicle to engage staff and parents together. It does not turn child care teachers into family therapists, but it fosters an appreciative, supportive stance towards parents.

The program also provides neighboring institutions an inexpensive, visible model of successful parent involvement and support. PSP is a powerful proof that low- and moderate-income working families respond eagerly to a menu of activities when they are involved in planning; when simple needs for babysitting, food, and convenient scheduling are accommodated; and when staff exhibit a positive regard for their needs and capacities.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

PSP Program Evolution

PSP has had an eventful history. It has progressed successfully from pilot program development, through a formal, independent impact evaluation, to the creation of materials and training services to guide implemention in other communities and different types of early childhood agencies. PSP has experienced steady growth in the number of participating agencies and families. Yet, these impressive achievements have been accompanied by a variety of setbacks, as summarized in the following chronology:

KEY EVENTS IN PSP'S CHRONOLOGY

1980	San Francisco Foundation and Zellerbach Family Fund initiate PSP in four child care agencies, serving over 400 families.
1982	Implementation grants provided to four additional Bay Area child care agencies.
1984	California legislature passes a bill to support PSP implementation in other state-funded child development centers, but legislation is vetoed by the Governor.
1986	From Child Care To Family Care: The Parent Services Handbook published to highlight strategies and lessons from pilot sites.
1986	A second PSP bill, AB 2413, to provide $486,000 for state-wide implementation, is passed by the legislature but vetoed by the Governor.
1988	Outcome evaluation completed by Allen Stein and Associates.
1988	Beginning of training and dissemination to programs in other states.
1991	A third PSP bill, AB 982, to allocate $1.5 million in federal funds to sponsor programs throughout California, is passed in the legislature but vetoed by the Governor.

Funding

A crucial theme in PSP's evolution has been monetary support. Even in its inception, there were disparities in funding of the four pilot sites, because one sponsoring foundation was administering a trust fund which could only be spent in Marin County. According to an article by Judy Pope, an evaluator and liaison between the Zellerbach Fund and the projects, the two Marin County centers received an average of $1,200 per family per year, while other sites received $225 to $375 per family.

As noted in the chronology, PSP leaders led several campaigns to spread and institutionalize the program through state funding, but fell short of success by the thinnest of margins:

> "We tried for ten years to carry a piece of legislation in our state, the Parent Services Project Bill. We got it through the legislature three times, but our esteemed governors vetoed it. And the last time it was astounding to me -- it got out of the assembly with unanimous support, and got out of the senate with two or three no votes. But overriding a Republican Governor's veto is like overturning one by a Republican President at the federal level."

Foundations have sustained their support to the original sites for more than a decade. However, they have gradually scaled back their levels of funding for the operational costs of parent coordinators and other services. Accordingly, centers have reduced their range of activities, sought alternative funding sources, and involved parent policy committees in fundraising and setting priorities. However, all of the original pilot sites have maintained a commitment to PSP strategies and philosophy as a permanent component of their agencies.

> "We originally started in the early 1980s with about $75,000 or $80,000 for the project, and last year we were down to about $7,000 from the foundation. Agencies have done fund raisers to support other activities because the parents don't want to give them up. So even though we've had to streamline, we have maintained a small pool of money for parents to direct, several education sessions, and respite care activities to keep the PSP concept alive."

At the same time as sites have worked to continue funding for PSP services, they face continuing challenges in sustaining support for their core function of child care. The PCDCI director describes a typical situation as follows:

> "About three years ago we started facing a deficit because the state department funding was not increasing but our costs were escalating. We looked at diversifying our funding base and we have succeeded with proposals for a comprehensive child care program, and an infant and toddler center. But today, I just got a letter from the United Way announcing a potential cut of one-third in their support, so it's like you can't take a step forward for having to take two steps backwards. Instead of being able to focus on the quality of our program, we're always putting out the fires. There's a limit to how much you can cut. Sooner or later you lose the quality of your program."

A particularly acute challenge for child care agencies is their inability to support adequate salary levels for staff members, due to limitations in funding from parent fees and public agencies:

> "Our salaries are not commensurate with school districts' or other agencies'. Our average salary for a site director, with a B.A. degree and a Children's Center Permit is from $1,400 to $1,600 a month. Within the past two years, I've lost some key employees to Head Start, which has caused a lot of consternation. They can work four or six hours a day part-time at Head Start and make as much or more than they make for us."

Disseminating PSP to Other Programs and Communities

One of the primary goals of PSP is the dissemination of its early childhood education and parent involvement philosophy. During the same period as the initial legislative effort, PSP began cultivating a capacity to help other communities implement its strategy. An external impact evaluation was commissioned by the host foundations, materials were developed to describe the program, and local directors sought opportunities to talk about their experiences at state and national conferences. Through a contact with the Director of the A.L. Mailman Foundation in 1986, PSP was asked to conduct training in a series of programs in Florida. A variety of additional opportunities have ensued, including a Ford Foundation initiative to connect PSP with a family day care initiative in Atlanta, and requests to work with Head Start programs, state-funded preschool programs, public schools, and agencies helping with teenage parents.

The dissemination activities led to the formation of a separate PSP organization and a core training duo (the directors of the PCDCI agency and the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center) to carry out the bulk of the workshops and follow-up activities. The training strategy is as follows:

> "We begin with what we call pre-training with the local players who are critical to success. One session is for the existing parent group, one is with key community agency leaders, and the third piece is with staff, because a typical reaction when administrators bring an innovative 'gem' in is that staff think, 'Uh oh, this means more work for me.' The next stage is that each program selects two lead people to attend a week-long implementation training which merges the philosophy, the value shifts and specific strategies. We visit programs that are engaged in family support so that they can experience and see what's happening. We bring in videos and a slide show. We put the hard issues on the table -- the issues of 'turfism', the issues of racism, the issues of sexism. Then they go home and experiment with getting it off the ground, and we come out to see if there are any glitches in implementation. We try to build in a year of follow up consultation, and we try create coalitions of neighboring programs."

PSP has been implemented successfully in a wide range of communities across the country and in several types of early childhood agencies and programs. The PSP director estimates a cost of $350-$400 per family per year for implementing PSP to a new site. The PSP trainers recommend that programs plan for a full-time family service position for each 100 families and funding for respite child care, workshops and activities and a discretionary fund for parents to administer. These estimates do not cover other likely needs of families, such as access to health services or literacy and employment training for parents. Thus an important training topic is inter-agency collaboration and connecting families with existing social services.

Relationships with Public Schools

PSP would like to see the principles of family support and involvement to be sustained by public school systems as they receive children and families coming from child care and early childhood programs:

> "There should be a natural trickle up from PSP, but a great fear is that when parents go on to the schools, they begin to drop off and stop coming due to being patronized or ignored. Part of our effort is to assure what they get here should be able to carry them through their lives."

Given the PSP priority on family support and involvement, it is interesting to hear how staff and parents judge the transition into schools. The most common response is a feeling that public schools fail to sustain a positive connection with parents:

> "Many of our families move from coming to the meetings and being curious, to getting involved in the activity, to taking on a leadership role, to then being an advocate before the state legislature. After they leave us, there's often a total drop, because schools are not viewed as welcoming parents to engage in activities or planning. Unless you are sophisticated enough to know how policy is made at the board level, you're going through too many mazes to understand your role. So parents become very frustrated. There aren't many evening or weekend activities where you connect with other parents. Teachers leave at 3:30 and they usually do not call parents unless there's a problem. Whereas in PSP, you see the teacher every day, and you're involved in activities together, so you know Mrs. Brown is going to call you because she needs a ride."

Parents corroborate this perspective with their own experience:

> "People are cold. You don't know what's happening. They have meetings where just the principal talks. We at PSP generate a positive feeling within people. If it's not continued, you can lose the spark."

Partly in response to this emerging pattern of negative relations between parents whose children have attended PSP centers and the public schools, PSP centers are trying to create ways to continue working with families as their children grow. For instance, the Canal Center has recently received a three-year grant to provide after-school tutoring for children.

Another noteworthy example of PSP connections with public schools occurs in the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center, which is working closely with the local Ross Valley School District to apply PSP principles to families with children of all ages. Ross Valley is engaged in a school improvement project called Collaborative Learning Communities, with task forces on family support, service learning, afterschool activities, and community education. The district also established an interagency task force known as Community and Schools Together for the purpose of exchanging information and resources. As a result of this project, several former PSP parents initiated a Family Forum in one neighborhood to improve communications and support resources for parents through monthly meetings, training sessions, and networking. In another instance, the principal of a school has involved parents in redesigning the primary grade program:

> "In the long term we want a commitment from parents to a three-year, multi-age educational program where kids can work well, play well, and bond well together. We need ways to include parents in building a shared knowledge base with staff, but without talking down to them. For example this summer we have a project for kindergarten and first grade teachers and parent volunteers to redesign the physical classroom environment to make it more conducive to creative discovery.

A second component of the district effort is addressing the non-academic needs of students and families. Yet an underlying concern is a scarcity of resources and restrictive policies which often limit responses to problems:

> "We had a boy in sixth grade, from a family at risk -- every kind of trauma going on in this family that you can imagine. Now he is going to middle school -- a very big transition. All of the professionals around the table who had worked with this kid since he's a little five-year-old are white knuckling, saying, 'We need to make an intervention now, before the impending catastrophe. Can't we step in, in a preventive way and do this?' But the way the thing goes is you have to get in trouble, big-time. We have to push you over the edge and watch you sink before we can extend the net. But many of the restrictions on access to services are because the resources aren't there."

The Ross Valley Superintendent of Schools sees a particular need to focus new efforts on support to early adolescents and their parents:

> "What's so frustrating to me is that you have to keep a campus that's safe for the majority of the children. So when there are kids doing things that they shouldn't be doing there, the avenue is expulsion, and yet when you expel the kid, there's absolutely nothing out there. I see the little guys running around after they've been expelled --

> hanging out, doping, fighting, doing everything that you could think of that they shouldn't be doing. We need to cooperate on saving them. They're too young to let go at eleven, twelve years of age. They're not lost... yet."

The Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center helps when it can. For example, the center provided a volunteer position to be filled by a middle school student who was at risk of being expelled. The center proposes to extend the PSP strategy to parents of older children:

> "One thing that is missing for us is a connection with parents that are in deep trouble. Their kids are getting caught in the court system, they're being pressured by other kids to steal or use dope in the bathroom... I wonder how we can get parents that have been though some of these experiences to pass on some of those strategies to some that are really hiding, because they are so embarrassed that their kids are in deep, deep trouble."

As leaders in Ross Valley move forward to improve schools' connections with families, they are also beginning to scrutinize their own routines and attitudes:

> "Parents don't want things handed to them -- like, 'Read this, this is the plan.' But there's also a set of practical limitations on how much teachers can do, how much time they have, and what time working parents have to be more intensively involved in collaborative planning. It's a very practical problem -- it's not always a matter of lack of good will."

> "We're going to have to find different ways bring parents into our decision making process. This is new territory for me, and for our administrators. Fortunately, we've had PSP as an outside agency that's served as our learning vehicle."

> "You've got a whole culture that you're trying to reshape. We need to get a grip on things as simple as a parent being called into a conference with seven school people where the balance of power is totally ominous, or how to plan an open school night so parents feel comfortable about coming."

These comments illustrate a remarkable relationship between the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center and Ross Valley school leaders, one with a shared vision, shared concerns, and inclusion of early childhood philosophies leaders in shaping school reform efforts in the community. In the end this partnership is derived from a powerful sense of shared responsibility for children, as expressed by Children's Center Director Ethel Seiderman:

> "There are days I wake up and I say, 'What the hell am I doing in juvenile court?' I have to go through an emotionally wrenching experience with 13-year-old girls who are wearing orange t-shirts. I was telling them they're already wearing prison uniforms, and I just broke down crying. There's enough stress in my life, you know? So we're all struggling. Why is the school doing this? Why is child care? I used to look over my shoulder and say maybe there's help coming. But there's no help out there. We're it."

* * *

PSP has made the difficult leap from a pilot program to a presence on the national scene, with materials and training services, visibility in the media, and achingly-close-to-successful state legislation. It has moved from a concept of a foundation planning group to an autonomous national organization supporting implementation in dozens of sites across the country.

Success in the maturation of the PSP approach is due to a mix of factors. First, the founding foundations sustained their fiscal support long enough for pilot sites to refine the program; they were willing and able to invest in a major program evaluation and in training and supporting local managers and staff; and they adopted a flexible stance toward defining PSP, allowing each local site to shape services to fit the needs of their families and communities. Second, skillful leadership from the local programs made PSP's impressive track record possible. The ambition, commitment, and collaborative effort of key individuals to implement the program, demonstrate its worth, and extend the PSP concept to benefit other programs, communities, and families is remarkable: during PSP's first decade these leaders managed to run their individual local child care programs, generate a coalition to support state legislation for PSP, create a national dissemination center, and develop some remarkable partnerships with local public school systems.

CONCLUSION

PSP is a success in program development. Many creative ideas of foundation officials do not work out in practice. Thus it is appropriate to acknowledge PSP's maturation and quantitative spread is an impressive achievement. An attractive idea of applying the principles and strategies of the family support movement to child care programs has proven to be workable, affordable and efficacious. PSP "works" when it is implemented in relatively healthy and stable child care programs, in communities with a reasonably adequate set of other services to support families. The program's relatively low implementation costs make it easier for a wider range of communities to consider adopting PSP as a strategy. But it also defines some limits on what PSP can accomplish as an independent treatment.

PSP seems appropriately interpreted as a creative way to strengthen and improve child care programs which are already stable, healthy environments for participants. Not all child care agencies are appropriate vehicles for the PSP ideas. The host child care agency must have sufficient support to attract and retain competent staff for its core function of safeguarding and teaching children. In addition, staff must share a basic desire to improve their relationships with families and a willingness to devote additional effort towards this end. Secondly, PSP programs rely on other community agencies to respond when families need help in areas such as health, mental health, and employment training. Networking and referral strategies can help change situations at the margins, shifting the sequence of responses to clients on a waiting list, or bending eligibility and service definitions. However, when core family services are eroded or oversubscribed, the potential for collaboration and a synergy of public services is restricted.

JAMES E. BIGGS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER - COVINGTON, KY.

"A School-Community Partnership Serves Young Children and Families"

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Director	Dr. Diane Roketenetz
Year Opened	1990
Number of Children Served	292
1992-1993 Budget	$775,000+
Primary Funding Source	State Department of Education

POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- The Biggs Center is a result of a top-down mandate and bottom-up leadership. The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 provided the funding and policy guidance for new preschool and family support services. The Covington school district responded by consolidating existing early childhood education services (including intervention efforts for young children with disabilities) and generating additional home visitation and family involvement initiatives.

- This initiative is managed by a creative partnership between the Covington public school system, and a local United Way child care agency, Children, Inc. This dual management structure takes advantage of the fiscal and administrative capacities of the school district and the program expertise and flexibility of a private non-profit organization.

- Leadership and staff of the Biggs Center have an exceptional commitment to involving and supporting families as integral partners in early childhood education. Accordingly, the center is rich with adult activities that are well integrated into the program. For example, more than 100 parents complete a training program on serving as effective aides in classrooms and they contribute more than 2000 days of volunteer support to the teaching staff. In addition, the program has over 100 fathers who participate in activities and service opportunities.

- The Covington program uses creative funding strategies. The efficient mix of district and private agency employees optimizes the use of limited funds. Children, Inc. pays teachers on its salary scale, which frees up dollars for parent activities. The school district contributed $1.8 million to purchase and renovate a state-of-the-art facility for the program.

INTRODUCTION

The James E. Biggs Early Childhood Education Center in Covington, Kentucky illustrates how one school district used a state education reform initiative to develop a creative and high quality early childhood program. Whereas most early childhood programs are operated by a single institution, the Biggs Center has a dual management structure reflecting its two governing entities, the school district and Children, Inc, a local non-profit child care agency affiliated with the United Way. As equal and genuinely cooperative partners, the district and child care agency deliver their family-focused early childhood services with a large degree of flexibility and innovation.

The Biggs Center serves 262 "at-risk" four-year-old children in the Covington Public School District at a site that covers an entire city block in the inner city. The 20,000 square foot building and 32,000 square foot playground and landscaped garden are designed to be attractive and comfortable for both children and parents. The seven classrooms and the Parent Center are brightened by tall windows; outdoors there are trees, flowers, and a colorful array of playground equipment. Children attend half-day sessions four days a week and receive four home visits during the school year. Preschool children with disabilities are fully integrated into the program. The preschool program is comprehensive, offering educational activities for children and parents, medical and dental services, family support and access to social services. In 1992 the Center added a home visiting program for 30 three-year-old children.

One philosophy unites the school district and child care agency staff: "Home plus school equals learning." This thought is woven into the program, from enrollment through transition to kindergarten. The belief supports a high level of school outreach to parents; it has encouraged an equally impressive response of parents to supporting their children's development, as well as in their own growth as parents and community members.

Seeing the early childhood initiative as an ideal entry point for involving the school and parents together, the district made a strong commitment to establish the program. The program has grown rapidly, using an entrepreneurial strategy that builds on early successes and finds innovative ways to support expansion. The unique features of this program -- flexibility, participative management, and family-focused early childhood services -- suggest this collaborative arrangement deserves close scrutiny.

We begin this case study by discussing the program's beginnings, the policy context in which it was developed, and family and community needs. Then we describe the Covington preschool program's breadth of services: after the initial recruitment, offerings include preschool classes, special education, home visiting, children's health services, parent involvement activities, and a Family Resource Center. From here we move to Covington's organizational strategy, the approaches used to implement the program, and specific issues it faced. In particular, we focus on the management structure and style, staffing and funding, and collaboration with other community agencies. The case study concludes with a look at the potential future of the school district and child care agency partnership and one key change that could make the program a synergy of multiple entities.

Program Inception and Policy Context

Several important factors influenced the evolution of the Biggs Center: the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA), strong local leadership, the concept (and acceptance) of running the program as a partnership, and an entrepreneurial attitude to expansion.

In the 1980s, the Covington school district saw that a significant number of children were lacking the skills for kindergarten and responded by starting a "Saturday School" and summer programs for children with special educational needs. A decade later, the passage of KERA, Kentucky's sweeping education reform act, served as the impetus to build from these initiatives into a more comprehensive early childhood initiative, the James E. Biggs Early Childhood Education Center.

KERA was an extremely comprehensive strategy for influencing all aspects of education reform. Two KERA components formed the basis for Covington's early childhood strategy. First, Section 16 of KERA provided support for "developmentally appropriate half-day preschool education" for four-year-old children who are "at risk of educational failure", with based on participation in free school lunch program. The state guidelines were comprehensive, calling for educational services, parent involvement, coordination of medical and social services, and linking the early childhood education philosophy to the primary school program. Applicants are expected to work with other preschool programs in their area to minimize duplication of services, to avoid supplanting federal funds, and to maximize Head Start funds so that as many four-year-old children as possible can be served.

A second KERA mandate (Section 18) provided resources to establish Family Resource Centers and Youth Service Centers in areas where at least 20 percent of the students qualify for free school meals. These centers, located in or accessible to an elementary school, are school-based collaborative efforts to bring community resources together (such as social service agencies, the health department, the business sector, churches, and voluntary organizations) to serve children and support families. To assure community ownership, each center sets up a local advisory body comprised of parent, school, and community representatives. Services provided include child care, adult education, employment training, parenting skills, family counseling, and referrals to health, housing, food, and other social services. Thus KERA has had important ramifications for Covington, providing the incentive to establish a comprehensive early education program linked to a Family Resource Center.

In April 1990, just as KERA was signed into law, James E. Biggs, Covington's incoming superintendent, brought together three key people to plan a strategy for securing KERA funds: Jayne Morgenthal, his Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Diane Roketenetz, Director of the Saturday School; and Rick Hulefeld, Director of Children, Inc., a local nonprofit child care agency. Biggs also worked behind the scenes to obtain school board support of the preschool and to negotiate with the local diocese the purchase of the unused Bishop Howard Elementary School. In mid-July, just two weeks after he became superintendent, Biggs met with the school board for the first time officially and convinced it to purchase the Bishop Howard school for $200,000; he also secured $1.6 million in local bond money to renovate the building. Biggs's assistant superintendent spent that summer writing the KERA grant proposal while Roketenetz and Hulefeld began tapping potential staff. In August the district learned that the state Department of Education had approved its proposal. By October 1990, six months after the passage of KERA, the preschool opened its doors to 250 children.

Biggs explains why he decided to move so fast with the school board on the preschool:

> "I pride myself with selling ideas, and this was an idea that had to happen. I've worked in the state Department of Education, and believe me, if the budget's not there to drive it, no reform is going to happen. When the state folks offered us the first round of money, I said, 'We're going to take it now.' I used to be one of those people in the state department who'd have to call people and explain to them why they weren't getting their money. I've been down that path and I thought, 'I'm not going to be sitting here when that call comes; we're going to be established and going.' If I had waited until last year to have done this, where would we be? The shortfall of taxation has hit us and all the legislation in the world doesn't make up for a shortfall in revenue."

Because the superintendent chose to implement the program quickly and on a sizeable scale, and because the school district did not have the capacity to operate a preschool of scale, the district contracted Children, Inc. to provide the actual program services. The partnership with Children, Inc. reflects the school district's recognition that educational innovation and high quality programs are predicated on the optimal use of community resources. In addition, contracting the operation of the preschool to a nonprofit child care agency gave the program a great deal of flexibility in staffing. Children, Inc. and the school district hired the Biggs Center staff together, with a goal of finding highly trained and experienced preschool teachers. However, because the preschool is not part of the school system, teachers did not have to be certified (though college degrees were required).

The Biggs Center has grown rapidly since its first year, adding several components: the integration of three- and four-year-old handicapped children in the preschool; a Chapter 1-funded classroom; a home visiting program for three-year-old children and parent involvement activities; and a KERA-funded Family Resource Center. Program expansion has built on the needs of children, as well as on previous successes. When the Chapter 1 component happened to have additional money for another four-year-old class, the Center did not have any class space available. Instead management designed the three-year-old home visiting program. The Biggs Center director says,

> "We have this program for four-year-old children and we're finding that three-year- old children are miles behind in their language development. It's not difficult to provide the services. Parents are really hungry for help and seem to be very responsive and we're getting positive feedback. So it's like success on one program drives it to the next level."

The three-year-old program has had strong demand; there were 65 children on a waiting list the first year even before the program began. Because it has been successful, management is now exploring taking the home-based model to even younger children. Current projects include adding an infant and toddler component and raising funds to evaluate the program. It is also involved in a partnership with Edustar America, Inc. for research and development of preschool computer-based learning.

Family and Community Needs

Covington is a community of 43,000 people within the metropolitan area of Cincinnati in northern Kentucky. In the last ten years, this river city has made major economic development efforts, and northern Kentucky is on an economic upswing as well. An enterprise zone on the city outskirts has attracted several large businesses. One of the stipulations for corporations moving into the zone is that one-fourth of new employees must have been unemployed or on public assistance within the prior six months. The Internal Revenue Service has relocated its regional service center to Covington, making it the town's largest employer.

Despite these changes a high proportion of Covington families are poor. Almost 70 percent of the children who attend the Covington Independent Public Schools qualify for the free school lunch program, and it is generally this population of children from low-income families that the Biggs Center serves. In the 1993-1994 year, the program served 328 families: 40 percent had two working parents, 38 percent had one employed parent, and 22 percent were unemployed.

The preschool teachers observe that many of the children live in a stressful home environment. Many are raised by parents with limited parenting skills or, sometimes, by grandparents caring for other grandchildren too. By the time they reach preschool age, the children who come from large families may be taking care of younger siblings. When asked to describe the strengths of the children, teachers talk about their "resilience" and "stamina." They view the children as having many needs, but being curious and animated. And, as one teacher remarks:

> "They know how to handle themselves, stuff like, 'My mother told me if he bothers me I can knock him down.' They know what they have to do to survive even if it's not the most appropriate thing for the classroom."

PROGRAM SERVICES

The Covington program merges two types of early childhood education services mandated by KERA: one for four-year-old children "at risk of educational failure and as many other four- year-old children as possible," and another for "any handicapped child who is three or four years of age." Services provided include the preschool program, special education, home visiting, and health services for children. Both the school system and Children, Inc. strongly and actively endorse parent involvement, and the program provides specific adult services. The Family Resource Center complements the offerings at the Biggs Center.

Recruitment of Families

During its first year, the Covington preschool staff knocked on many doors to recruit participants. The following year the Family Resource Center's family advocates did a massive mailing to public housing units and continued their outreach efforts with personal and telephone contacts. The advocates also gather lists of potential participants to contact by networking with community agencies. Word of mouth brings in many families, too.

The Biggs Center director estimates that when the 262 children served by the preschool are added to the number of Covington children served by Head Start (45 children in the adjacent town of Newport) and other local child care agencies (another 25 children), about 90 percent of low-income children in the city are receiving a preschool education. While recruitment efforts for children eligible for the state program have been successful, the staff is concerned about families who are slightly over income and must be turned away:

> "We wish we could serve everybody, but there are a lot of four-year-olds out there in families who are over the income level -- they still don't have a lot of money --and we feel we would like to get those folks."

Because the preschool has developed a good reputation in the community, parents may try to enroll their children through the Chapter 1 program, whose eligibility criteria are more flexible. The Biggs Center project leader notes that when registration opens in March,

> "This will be the busiest night because all of the folks who are over-income, who don't qualify for the at-risk program, come the first registration date because they want [their kids] to be eligible for the Chapter 1 class."

In this instance, the children are screened and the Chapter 1 guidelines are followed in determining admissions. While parents may not be familiar with the technical aspects of screening the word is out on the street:

> "If you don't meet the income eligibility guidelines, you'd better come here soon for Chapter 1 tests."

Another factor influencing recruitment is the Biggs Center's part-day operations, which best fit the schedules of unemployed parents. The majority of the families the center serves look for full-day child care arrangements, however, and the program tries to assist parents by providing referrals to other Children, Inc. sites or Head Start programs. Unfortunately, at that point family finances and eligibility criteria may become obstacles.

Classroom-Based Early Childhood Services

The preschool program, accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, operates two half-day sessions Monday through Thursday. Teachers attend staff meetings and conduct home visits on Fridays. Typically, children arrive at 8:45 a.m. and eat a hot breakfast before going to their classrooms. Learning activities, both indoors and out, occupy their time until the morning session ends at noon. Children in the afternoon group arrive at 12:45 p.m., eat lunch, and follow a similar schedule to the morning group. They leave at 4:00 p.m. Teachers assert that having a double session does not pose any special strain on them. They clearly enjoy teaching and find that even the same lesson plan works out differently with their two classes. They find the part-day schedule works well and suits the children's attention span.

Three principles underlie curriculum development:

- A developmentally appropriate learning experience that matches children's development and encourages children's freedom to plan and make choices
- A flexible curriculum that benefits from different strands of early childhood theories
- A curriculum geared toward lifelong education

Children are exposed to many stimuli in their classrooms and in the playground outside. Activities mostly occur in small-groups and are directed by the children themselves. The teacher and aides in the room rotate among groups of children; only infrequently are one-on-one interchanges sustained. More intensive teacher-student contacts are achieved through home visits.

A typical session in the Biggs Center might be as follows:

> The classroom is a hub of activity. Many activities occur simultaneously, but there is order and pattern, and children appear to know the routine. The 20 children cluster in small groups around tables, activity centers, or the classroom's computers; some work on individual projects. Children get along well with each other, share their activities, and appear comfortable in their setting. In the art corner, one girl wearing a full-length apron places her palms on an easel and gleefully outlines them with thick shaving cream. In the block area a boy sits on the carpeted floor and constructs a ramp. A parent reads a story to three children. The assistant teacher guides her group of five children in pasting colored shapes on to a piece of white paper. In the meantime the special education aide sits with two boys who are moving magnets around assorted glass jars filled with either paper clips, cloth strips, or pennies. When the teacher announces that it is clean-up time, the children put away their things and find their way to the sink to wash their hands. The children sit in a semi-circle on the floor while the special education aide and assistant teacher begin serving juice and crackers. The teacher reviews each child's project briefly before the class, explaining verbally and through sign language each student's accomplishments.

Special Education

Fifteen disabled children are enrolled at the Center. They participate in a program aimed to increase the child's self-reliance, independent problem solving, confidence, and self-control. Based on an approach that emphasizes a child's skills, strengths, and successes, the curriculum is enhanced where necessary to meet the special needs of each child. Each classroom has one or two children that are either severely/profoundly retarded, hearing impaired, developmentally delayed, or multiple handicapped.

One special education teacher supervises this part of the Biggs Center program. Her responsibilities include training and monitoring the seven special education assistants who work directly in the classrooms; diagnostic testing; working in the classroom and with parents on their children's individual education plan; coordinating with the speech and physical therapists; and doing all the related paperwork. This special education teacher assigns children to the classrooms based on a combination of space availability, class composition, and parent choice. She also tries to avoid giving teachers children with the same type of disabilities year after year. The special education staff also conducts home visits, and, on average, children receive eight visits during the school year.

The integration of disabled children in the classroom has been a challenge; some of the preschool teachers initially were apprehensive about including disabled children in their classrooms, according to the special education supervisor:

> "I had one of the teachers come to me and she said that she just does not feel comfortable working with this child. And I understand the situation; except for one teacher the rest haven't had any experience working with special ed children. So I said, 'Well, maybe you can try to spend a couple of minutes just sitting with this child, playing with him, so that you can feel more comfortable.' The other day I did notice that when she divided her class into small groups, she did take the child with the disability into her small group. To me that was a major accomplishment, that she feels comfortable enough to have that child in her class. I think that's an experience that has to develop on its own and you can't force it on people. I can just give suggestions and see that level of comfort grow step by step."

The special education aides try to work with all the children in the classroom, but are challenged in attempting to attend at the same time to those children with more severe disabilities. Difficult as these situations are, the aides are positive about their work and find validation from the respect they receive from teachers and parents. The presence of a special education assistant does lead some teachers to think that the disabled child is no longer their responsibility. The supervisor tries to help the teachers recognize that they need to interact with the child and oversee their work and interactions with other children. Over time the teachers have improved their ability to integrate the special education children in the class smoothly and are more easily involved with them. Special education children are now seen as natural members of the class, and their presence no longer surfaces as an issue during staff meetings.

Home-based Services

Home visits are special learning occasions when children and parents receive individualized attention. The visits are conducted by the teacher and the teaching aide as a pair. While this procedure was developed as a safety precaution, it has enhanced the quality of home visits by effectively doubling the time and attention spent on a family. In the course of a home visit, teachers attend to the needs of the preschool child; involve other siblings in activities; inform the parent of the ways children develop with the help of toys, games, songs, and verbal exchanges; and model ways for parents to interact with their children.

Children in the four-year-old program funded by KERA receive three to four home visits during the school year. Sometimes, because of scheduling difficulties, a "reverse home visit" occurs, and a parent comes to the preschool for a session. Parents voice positive opinions of home visits:

> "They [the teachers] involve all of the kids. They involve all the siblings."
>
> "I like the home visits because I have my older teenagers, with my grandson being three. The teens learn how to play with him and teach him things too with the games that the teachers bring."
>
> "If it's real nice, we'll be outdoors and they'd sit down and do a little class. And the neighbors' kids come over and the other kids learn about the Center."

The Chapter 1 program for three-year-old children, a component of the Biggs Center preschool program, combines home-based and center-based activities; but the former is considered the backbone of the program. In part, this is because transportation to the preschool is not provided and attendance at the center is irregular. The Chapter 1 parent coordinator observes:

> "In the winter time, it's tough. We've had about 50 percent show up. A lot of parents have to take buses, some of them have to walk here, and with two children sometimes. And that just makes it tough."

The home-based portion of the Chapter 1 program is carried out by one teacher and one teaching aide, both of whom have master's degrees in early childhood education. As a team they visit each family twice a month. The home visits integrate four curriculum areas: language development, cognitive formation, fine and gross motor development, and social and emotional growth. Teaching methods combine elements of the High/Scope and Parents as Teachers curricula. The families in this program are scheduled to visit the Biggs Center every Friday. The Chapter 1 parent coordinator holds a parenting session during this weekly meeting while teachers work with the children in a group setting.

In the Chapter 1 program, a number of activities are condensed into a 45-minute home visit. The following visit with Janet, a single mother, and her children, two-year-old Kim and three-year-old Alyssa is typical for teachers Gerry and Debra:

> **Story time**: The session begins with Gerry reading the adventures of Corduroy the bear to Alyssa and inviting her participation through questions about what she sees in the book. Debra notes down their interaction and then turns her attention to Kim, giving her a ball and a soft book with which to play with her mother. When Gerry is done with the story, she brings out a basket of clothes and a teddy bear for the activity portion of the visit.
>
> **Activity time**: Gerry asks Alyssa to sort the clothes, and then both teachers model the kind of learning that can go on when children help with the laundry. The teachers ask, "What has the pocket? Where is the blue shirt? How many pairs of socks are there?" Alyssa is not verbal, but she points to the clothes and sorts them. Gerry praises her and gives her the stuffed bear to undress and dress again in a new set of clothes. She explains to Janet that dressing the bear develops the finger muscles. Debra takes out a plastic strawberry container with a piece of yarn and a hairpin to serve as sewing tools. While Gerry takes Kim in her lap, Janet helps Alyssa thread the yarn through the holes of the container. Debra explains that sewing helps the child understand the concepts of "in" and "out," "short" and "long," and coordinates eye and hand movement. "What is happening to the yarn?" she asks. "It's getting little," says Alyssa. "Let's make it long again," Debra coaches, and mother and child unwind the yarn.
>
> **Song and game time**: Next the teachers ask Alyssa to cover her eyes with her hands and Janet to hide in the small living room. The teachers sing, and at the end of the song Alyssa eagerly runs to look for her mother. They repeat the hide-and-seek game several times, with Gerry asking, "Where is Mom?" When Alyssa points, Gerry and Debra encourage her to repeat after them, "Behind the chair... by the door... by the telephone... behind the box."
>
> **Review**: As Debra plays with Kim, putting a ball in the strawberry container and taking it out, Gerry hands Janet a stack of cards to give Alyssa. She asks Alyssa to tell her mother what she sees as each card, illustrated with a teddy bear, is passed to her. With Gerry's prompting Alyssa retells the story of Corduroy. The teachers leave Janet a sheet containing copies of the teddy bear cards and suggest repeating the story telling session. The teachers and Alyssa sing a song together before bidding the family goodbye.

Health Services

The Biggs Center employs a full-time registered nurse who oversees health care services and records management. When the Center first opened, the nurse found that very few children had had a recent physical examination; some had never been to a doctor or been immunized. Therefore she sees to it that the children have a full physical checkup by a physician and receive up-to-date immunizations, and she attends to their other medical needs during the school year. In the fall she weighs and measures all the children and then does this again in the spring to assess their growth. Should there be any indication of nutritional problems, she refers the parents to the health department or suggests they see their health care providers.

The collaboration of community health care providers enables the Biggs Center to offer primary health care services. The county health department conducts on-site lead screening, immunizations, and health education. The Lion's Club lends the use of its vision screening equipment. Hearing screening is conducted by Cincinnati Speech and Hearing, which owns a van with soundproof booths that comes to the Center. The school district has also entered into a contract with Northern Kentucky Family Health Center (NKFHC), a nonprofit clinic located across the street from the Biggs Center, to provide medical and dental services. The school reserves appointments for children who register at the preschool in mid-August and have not been examined by a physician, as state law requires. If the families try to call doctors in the community, the waiting period can be as long as two months. Thus the referral to NKFHC opens the way for families to become established clients and, hopefully, follow up on medical concerns.

Parent Involvement and Family Support Services

Perhaps the most impressive feature of Covington's program is its commitment to and success in strengthening parents' involvement in their child's education. The Covington superintendent of schools and the director of Children, Inc. both strongly endorse parent involvement, saying, respectively:

> "The salient thing for us is the ability to enter into positive relations with the family as whole. We're not sitting on our educational pedestal with all our educational laurels and saying, 'This is what we're going to do for you.' We're bringing families in and saying, 'Let's work together, let's develop a partnership.'"
>
> "The message we always give to the parents is they're the quarterbacks of the football team. The ball doesn't go down the field if they don't want it to go down the field. Too often, they've sat on the sidelines and some schools let them sit on the sidelines with the attitude, 'You give us your kids and we'll educate them.' We don't believe that."

The Biggs Center espouses a philosophy that the home-school partnership is reciprocal: the preschool program receives support from parents and gives them support as well. Many opportunities exist for parents to become involved in their child's development. Parents receive games and learning packets from teachers to supplement classroom activities; they give teachers important feedback on the materials. Parents can attend family events, such as movies night or storytelling sessions, that let enrolled children bring their schoolmates and family together. One of the most popular activities is Dad's Night, when the 110 fathers experience being preschoolers. According to one father,

> "The first thing we did was go to the kids' classroom. Fathers were down on the floor, playing with the kids in all their little sections and the kids were just ecstatic. It was really incredible to see the turnout of all the fathers. They were there for their children and it really impressed the kids, and that was the greatest thing for them."

Similarly, 50 mothers participated in a Mom's Make-Over at the vocational school, where they had their hair done and faces made up for free.

The Biggs Center's "jewel in the crown", is the participation of parents in the classroom and drop-in child care room. Parents may choose to take a 12-hour training course, after which they can serve as classroom aides. They receive a $10 per half-day stipend during training and classroom service, the latter not to exceed 35 days. Says the Center's director:

> "In our society when you do something and it's of value, you get paid for it. What we have found is that the stipend gets people in the door, gets them involved, and when their stipends run out, they still continue to come and volunteer. By that time they are very much enthused about what's going on here."

While approximately 100 parents attend the course annually, the number of parents working in the classrooms in a given year is greater, since many choose to contribute their time without being paid. Some parents even continue on and undergo intensive training in special education to be hired by the school district as aides; plans are underway to hire them for the three-year-old home visiting program. Children, Inc. also holds informational sessions for parents interested in learning about becoming home day care providers.

The extensive involvement of parents as aides is premised on the availability of unemployed parents who can participate in training and volunteer for the half-day period that their child is in the preschool program. The half-day commitment also avoids a potential conflict with a parent's child care needs. For working parents or parents with less time to offer, there are other opportunities for involvement, such as volunteering as field trip monitors and assisting the parent coordinator make the hundreds of puzzles, toys, and games that teachers use during home visits.

The home-school partnership yields a threefold return: the school supports parents, the parents support the school, and parents reinforce each other. Parents have formed their own informal networks of support, helping each other understand the development of their children and to grow as individuals. One parent says,

> "When some of the girls went to the vocational school to have their make-over they needed a babysitter, so I volunteered my house. That's something that I could do to help somebody else out. I just think we have a real great support group and we all try to do what we can for each other and any staff member."

Another parent who had been isolated for many years developed friendships at the Center and formed a group session called "Can We Talk?" modeled after the television show with the same name. While some lasting friendships are formed, some parents also feel a sense of loss when the school year ends. They know that many of them will not see each other again:

> "It feels like your family's splitting; it's neat to have gone through the year together but it's kind of hard to deal with, too."

The Biggs Center provides important experiences for parents. It is a place where they can feel good about themselves and develop their self-esteem, and it is a place where they feel welcome to participate in their child's development:

> "This is my first year coming to this school. My wife and I both got involved and it's a learning experience all the way through for both of us. Not only is our child going to school but we're learning as well."

> "They [the staff] don't have the attitude of saying, 'What can you do for us?' but it's, 'What can we do for you? Let's work together on what we can do for you.'"

The Family Resource Center, open to all families in the school district, works to provide families additional support services and helps identify and address barriers to parent involvement in the Biggs Center. Based on a needs assessment, three areas are the focus of Resource Center activity:

- **Information**: The Resource Center sends out weekly newsletters and prepares the telephone recording that informs parents of activities specific to each classroom, as well as overall events. Family advocates do home visiting, make phone calls to parents and frequent face-to-face contact at the preschool, and carry out surveys regarding areas of interest to parents.

- **Transportation**: Parents are asked to sign waivers that enable them to ride the school bus with their children and bring along younger children in order to attend parent programs at the Biggs Center. Family advocates provide transportation to social services agencies and other community resources.

- **Drop-in Child Care**: The Resource Center has a child care room available for children under four staffed by groups of trained parents. Parents are also referred to Children, Inc. for extended day care services at other sites.

The Family Resource Center offers adult-oriented services through linkages with community agencies:

- Instruction for General Equivalence Diploma (GED) classes given by the Covington Adult Learning Center

- A personal safety program and consulting services offered by the Northern Kentucky Women's Crisis Center

- Parenting sessions using the Nurturing Program curriculum and the Winning Program, that focus on behavioral management techniques instead of corporal punishment.

- JOBS workshops on alternative career skills led by the Northern Kentucky University Reentry Center

The family advocates meet parents at the preschool and conduct home visits as the need arises. One of the Resource Center's four family advocates comments,

> "I think we all have gotten involved with parents, with helping them deal with day-to-day things like housing problems, food problems, medical problems. We do become like social workers because we're out there trying to resolve problems that are seemingly impossible for families to take care of because of lack of transportation and lack of resources; we coordinate a lot of things for them."

Family advocates are assigned to specific classrooms and teachers appreciate the support they receive from them:

> "During our first year, when we didn't have the advocates, the emotional burden I had with troubled children was almost like an albatross around my neck. I don't know all the agencies in the city and did not have the information to give the children's parents. Now that I have a family advocate I can go to her and explain the problem and almost immediately, she gets on it; I get feedback and the child doesn't have to wait months to be helped."

The family advocates state that parents are the driving force behind their activities. In the first year of operations, the staff was more interested in implementing its own ideas but found that parents were not showing up for events they planned. Says one advocate:

> "Last year we thought we knew what all families need. We were prepared to offer all these wonderful programs. But parents just wanted what they wanted. So this year we broke up our advisory council into focus groups and parents told us what they want. It has worked much better."

Parents can participate in an advisory council for the Family Resource Center. The council is comprised of equal numbers of parents, school staff, and community representatives and meets quarterly. The council receives a copy of the grant application and budget and makes recommendations for the following year's proposal.

One parent expresses a function of the advisory council meetings:

> "[They] give us the opportunity to speak our mind, what we think about the school system, what's going right, what's going wrong; it gives parents the opportunity to actually voice their opinions."

The general information circulated from the Resource Center and the telephone recording of events are direct results of parents' expressed desire to know more about activities at the Biggs Center and in specific classrooms.

The Family Resource Center and the Biggs Center, which essentially function together as one unit, clearly convey their desire for families to be a part of their children's educational experience. Extending parent involvement from preschool to the K-12 system remains a challenge. One parent remarks,

> "There's a lot of schools that don't want you to be involved with their school. You cannot just walk into the classroom to see what's going on. You have to make an appointment. I don't want nobody pretending they're showing my child the attention he needs when they normally don't."

No magic formula exists to quickly transform traditional home-school barriers; the change process will take time. Says the director of Children, Inc.:

> "It's like flowers underneath the sidewalk, pushing up the sidewalk and cracking it."

The seeds of change have been sown, however. In keeping with the inclusive approach, the assistant superintendent has invited principals and kindergarten teachers in the district to observe the Biggs Center's activities. The parent coordinator teaches workshops at other school districts, and the

Chapter 1 parent coordinator brings her experience at the early childhood center to the other schools she serves. The preschool also provides a model of parent involvement and is a source of technical assistance for other schools in the district that are establishing their own Family Resource Centers. One elementary school has begun a training program for parents to work in the classroom. And recently the superintendent paired the preschool with an elementary school with the goal of bringing the staffs together to discuss and develop effective parent involvement strategies.

Participant Opinions and Outcomes

Parents praise what the program has done for their own outlook and how it has affected family dynamics:

> "They give you a chance to build your own self-esteem. The program's not just dealing with your kids but they also teach you to take time out for yourself. When we are at home things get so stressed that we can't stand nobody, and we can't stand ourself. And you come here and talk to anybody -- a parent, a staff member -- and nobody's going to look down on you. They respect you for who you are not what you are. That's what helps build your self-esteem."

> "We took [my daughter] to the grocery store the other day. Instead of turning on the radio, we was all singing school songs. Learning songs. 'Touch your nose' and all that, doing exercises. The kids were exercising in the back seat!"

> "It builds character in the family, too. It's more a learning experience at home as well as at school, for every member of the family."

In addition to a strong peer support network in which parents help each other out, parents talk about how the program has improved their rapport with their own child and interactions with other children. Many parents spend a great deal of time at the Center and enjoy being in the classroom, sitting and talking with children:

> "It gives parents the opportunity to meet other people. It gives them a chance to be themselves, to work with the kids, to be able to have that time to spend with [their own] child and learn things... Your kids teach you things that you never thought your four-year-old would know."

Home visits are popular with children and reinforce the home-school team:

> "The last time the teachers came to the house and were about to leave, my little girl climbed in my lap and asked me if I'd get mad if she told them that she loved them. She loves her teachers."

> "I like it when they come to our home. It shows my little boy that, you know, his teacher is more than welcome in my house... They'll sit and they'll play their little games, and they talk to you and you have like just a normal conversation. And the child picks that up and knows that his teachers are important."

Finally, parents express confidence that their involvement with their children will continue as they enter and progress through elementary and secondary schooling:

> "I think it takes a total involvement with your child's education and with the school and with their teachers, and it's a combined effort that everyone needs to get together and focus on the child, which is the main issue."
>
> "I think that they'll grow up knowing school's important, because they see that we're happy, and we're involved."
>
> "It helps this community, because we live all over in Covington, and we spread the word, and they see how our families are changing -- our friends see that, my mother sees that, my father, too."

* * *

The Biggs Center provides a well-balanced set of services, tailored to the needs of young children and their families. Classrooms and home visits successfully serve and involve both child and parent. Children with disabilities are fully integrated in each classroom at the Center. The classroom aide training program has been extremely successful, training more than 100 parents each year. These parents, who may continue to volunteer their time after their stipends run out, build a strong foundation for other volunteer activities. The active parent/peer support network and special outreach efforts to work with fathers are also noteworthy. Finally, the Family Resource Center, provides access to services in the community and gives parents the opportunity to participate in the governance of the program. Underlying this range of services is an innovative collaborative management team and a coherent staffing strategy which ties together the special skills and efforts of family advocates, teachers, aides, special education staff and home visitors.

The Covington program's present limitations relate to the design and definition of the program as specified by state legislation. That is, there is more demand for the program than there is space and families who do not meet the state's eligibility requirements are denied services they need. In addition, the preschool and home visiting components do not address the needs of working parents for full-day, full-year child care.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Perhaps the most unconventional aspect of the Biggs Center is its collaborative management structure. This section looks at this unusual but workable setup, which presents challenges and opportunities in the areas of staffing and funding as well, and is followed by a discussion of the Center's established and nascent efforts at collaboration with community agencies.

Management

The Covington school district and Children, Inc. joined their resources and strengths to develop the Biggs preschool program. The major contributions of the school district include the school building, classroom furnishings, educational materials and equipment, and all maintenance and janitorial services. It is also responsible for providing transportation. The district hires many, but not all, staff people: the program director, a secretary, the nurse and therapists, and the special education and Chapter 1 personnel (see chart). Through its contract with the school board, Children, Inc. recruits, hires, trains, and supervises a staff of 15. Children, Inc. operates the preschool program, which includes monitoring the curriculum, implementing parenting activities, and conducting program evaluation to improve operations. Children, Inc. also carries the insurance policy of the program. Both the school district and Children, Inc. share the responsibility of recruiting families into the program.

Children, Inc. receives a little over two-thirds of the state-funded "at-risk" preschool budget through the subcontract. (The total preschool budget includes funds from Chapter 1 and the Family Resource Center grants, which are outside the contract with Children, Inc.) Children, Inc. is reimbursed for actual expenses and submits a monthly voucher to the school district. It also receives a "consulting contract" fee and an additional fee for its director's services, based on an approximate half-time commitment; these account for 11 percent of the total subcontract. The school board has full access to the financial records of the activities covered by the contract and may have them audited.

A collaborative management system characterizes the Biggs Center. On a day-to-day basis, the work of each organization complements the other. The Center's director, Roketenetz or "Rocky" to the staff, is responsible for all activities that take place in the building. The director of Children, Inc., Rick Hulefeld, serves as a consultant and spends about four hours per day at the early childhood center. Hulefeld describes his partnership with Roketenetz as follows:

> "This type of partnership works because each person saw the opportunity... Rocky takes major responsibility for day-to-day operations and has a better grip on special education issues, due to her background. She uses me more as a process person in working with the staff. I provide advice and suggestions and then we arrive at consensus. On new initiatives, we tend to spark each other."

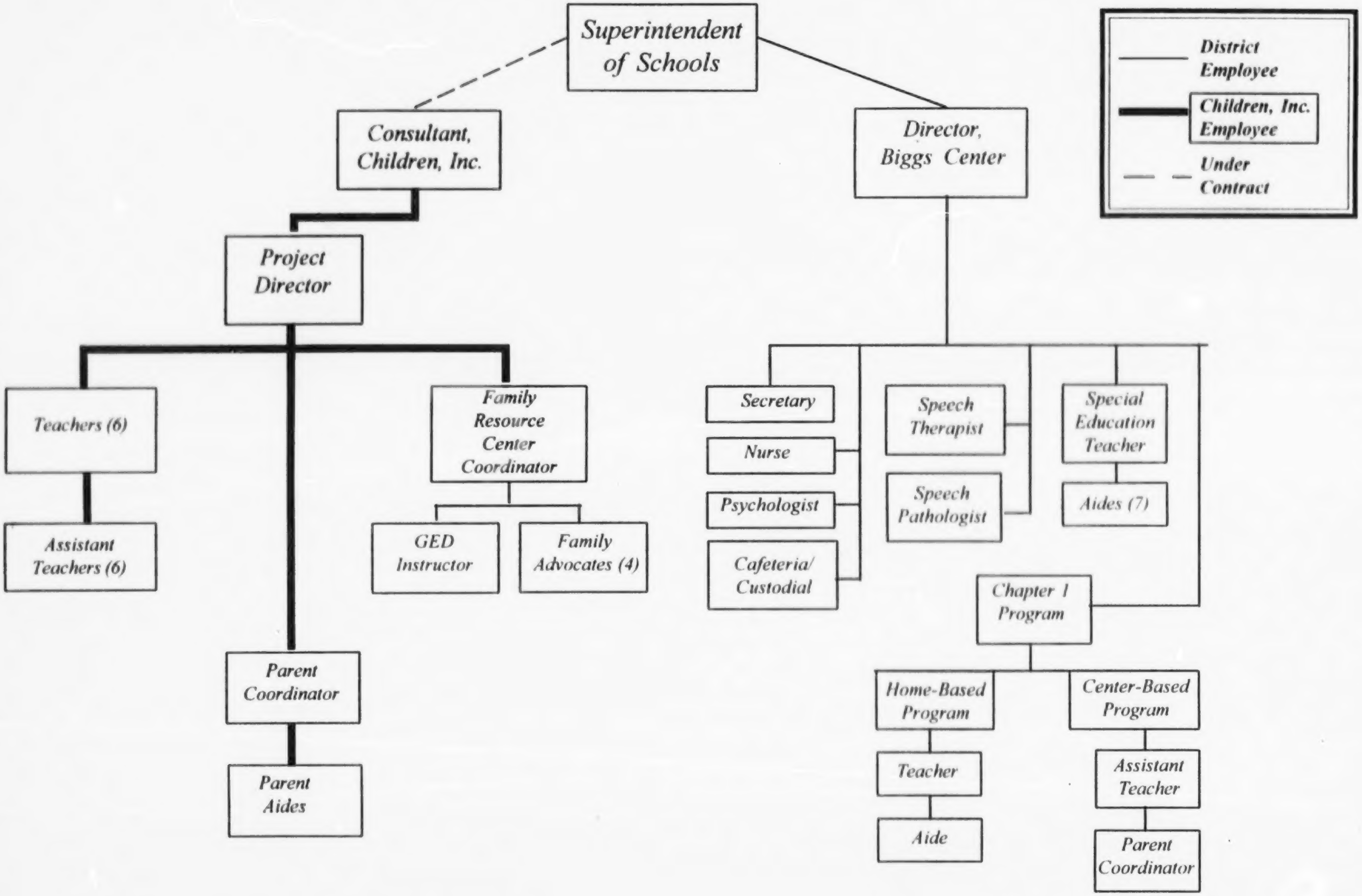
Hulefeld's on-site representative is Chris Kelley, who, as project leader, coordinates instructional activities and deals with personnel issues, discipline, and transportation. She compares her position to that of an assistant principal.

Working for two organizations, the school district and the nonprofit agency, sometimes creates perplexing situations for the staff. From the staff's point of view, the program director, the agency director, and project leader share overlapping responsibilities. The staff may direct inquiries according to whether decisions will involve the school district or Children, Inc. One staff member nicely sums up her strategy:

> "If we need to know whether something can be done in schools, we go to Rocky. I think I have a really clear idea of what those things are. On the other hand, there are certain pots of money Rick controls because he has the contract [to operate the preschool]; so if I want to know if I can spend $250 on pizza for parents' night, I will go and talk that over with him because it's going to come out of his budget."

However, in less clearly defined areas, the staff elicits responses from the Center's management and negotiates to arrive at one answer. And while this takes time, the staff does receive feedback. Some teachers, however, find the availability of three authority figures confusing:

> "If you go to one the reply sometimes is, 'I'll have to talk it over to Rick,' and if you go to Rick, 'Well, I'll have to talk it over to Chris,' or, 'Let's see what Rocky says.'"


Superintendent of Schools
Consultant, Children, Inc.
Director, Biggs Center
District Employee
Children, Inc. Employee
Under Contract
Project Director
Teachers (6)
Assistant Teachers (6)
Family Resource Center Coordinator
GED Instructor
Family Advocates (4)
Parent Coordinator
Parent Aides
Secretary
Nurse
Psychologist
Cafeteria/ Custodial
Speech Therapist
Speech Pathologist
Special Education Teacher
Aides (7)
Chapter 1 Program
Home-Based Program
Teacher
Aide
Center-Based Program
Assistant Teacher
Parent Coordinator

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In order to improve communication, especially as the numbers of staff have grown and activities multiplied, the program has instituted weekly staff meetings. At these meetings the three administrators try to offer a mix of inspiration and information, respond to staff inquiries, and engage staff members in small group decision making. As the program staff has increased from 23 the first year to over 50 today, the program and personnel have experienced growing pains. A two-day planning retreat in a country setting was held to involve all the staff in the overall plan of the program. The staff members set the agenda, identified program needs and priorities, and developed the calendar for the following school year. One parent advocate says:

> "Even if you think you want to be creative and doing new things all the time, you have to feel like you've some kind of structure or guidelines to where you're going. Once we had the structure anything else that happened during the year was all right."

Because all the staff had the opportunity to voice suggestions, the retreat reinforced the culture of local decision making.

In addition to the retreat and weekly staff meetings, small teams gather on a regular basis or as needs arise. The advocates at the Resource Center and the teachers at the Biggs Center meet weekly for lunch to discuss those families and children with which they both work. When a teacher has a discipline problem with a child or detects possible family problems, she refers the child to the special education teacher, who coordinates a teacher assistance team. That team involves the psychologist and other specialists, if needed, who discuss the case and make recommendations on which the special education teacher then follows up. Team efforts of this sort have helped staff improve communication with each other and keep them current with the Center's many activities.

Staffing and Training

Coming from diverse backgrounds, the staff of the early childhood program is creative, mutually supportive, and highly competent. The contract with Children, Inc. enabled the preschool program to hire teachers most suited for the job and avoid the situation of having to bump someone down from the elementary level to teach preschool. If the school district had chosen to hire the teachers, they probably would have been certified in elementary education (the state has no certification of preschool teachers). The preschool teachers' lack of certification, however, does not imply lack of ability. In fact, the teachers hired by Children, Inc. have college degrees -- some hold master's degrees -- and have many years of teaching experience.

The program has also benefitted from Children, Inc. acting as the hiring body, because the agency does not have to follow the school system's salary scale, which pays teachers between $20,000 and $40,000 per year depending on their experience. Teachers hired by Children, Inc. received an annual salary of $18,000 in 1992-93, which is lower than the school's rate of pay but higher than what they would receive from other local child care agencies. The difference in salary scales meant "savings" could be used to pay stipends to parents to become classroom aides, and small expenditures such as snacks for parenting sessions do not have to go through a lengthy requisition process.

Although the school staff and the nonprofit staff are on different salary scales, the discrepancy has not become a major issue. Of greater concern, especially for school employees, are the differences in the policies of the two organizations and their degree of flexibility, which create uneven working conditions. To take one example, the nonprofit agency gave staff members compensatory time for events that they have to attend in the evening; but the school system's regulations do not allow compensatory time. In response to this situation, Center management has tried to align the policies of both organizations. School employees such as the family advocates can claim compensatory time if they schedule evening sessions at least two weeks in advance. If a special event comes up suddenly requiring evening attendance, neither group of employees can ask for compensatory time. Some yearly events such as Dad's Night are also considered part of one's regular job for both groups. The staff has worked out its own arrangements, too. Each classroom has a teacher, teaching aide, and special education aide, and they rotate attendance at events that take place after school hours.

We can attribute this willingness to cooperate as a team to the program planners' success at recruiting staff who share a similar orientation:

> "Philosophically, they [staff members] were in tune with us and we were talking about the desire to serve a disadvantaged population, the desire to open up the school to parents and families, to have the school be family-friendly; and so the teachers and staff are respectful of all people."

Choosing staff who appreciated working with families has paid off. Parents feel comfortable with the staff members and can communicate with them openly and with trust, as indicated by their comments:

> "As soon as you walk in that door, you're family. We laugh and we joke and the teachers visit our homes."

> "The family advocates are great. They sit down with you and talk to you one-on- one. They ask if you need anything and they have the contacts, and it's all confidential."

> "Anything that they can do they bend over backwards to help."

Hiring staff who can work together on a challenging, sometimes uncharted program contributes to individuals' growth and development. The director of Children, Inc. recalls,

> "It was clear to people that our program would not do business as usual, that we'd always be trying something new. The staff's response was always, 'We're risk takers.' Administrators can only deal with so much chaos in their lives and so we brought good people in, and they made something happen that worked really well so we don't have to worry. And then naturally we go on to the next thing."

The ownership the staff feel for the Biggs Center has facilitated its growth: being involved in major program decisions engenders staff commitment to new ideas. For example, when the superintendent wanted to set up a new computer and software system, he called a meeting of the early childhood program staff to solicit its views. According to the Biggs Center's project leader:

> "Mr. Biggs sat in our round circle with all of our staff and just asked us what we thought. Are we going to write this off? There were lots of opinions -- this place is full of opinions -- and it was real consensual that the pros outweighed the cons."

Staff value these opportunities to participate in decision making:

> "This program is so important to us because we have a say."

Funding

Funding for the program comes primarily from Kentucky's Department of Education, through the state's education reform and other grants. The Family Resource Center, also mandated by KERA, is funded by the Cabinet of Human Resources. In 1992-93 the breakdown of these funds were:

Department of Education	
• Preschool At-Risk Program	$436,435
• Special Education	$204,033
• Chapter 1	$83,563
Cabinet of Human Resources	
• Family Resource and Youth Service Centers	$47,200

Because funds for the Family Resource Center are limited, the district has developed a creative strategy to afford that personnel: two family advocates are funded by the grant, and a third is supported through a combination of funds from the Family Resource Center grant, special education, and Chapter 1. The coordinator of the Family Resource Center is an employee of Children, Inc., and her position is funded through the Department of Education preschool grant.

The Covington program also receives numerous "mini-grants" for special activities, such as the transition model for handicapped children. These grants come from the business sector and smaller pockets of state education funds. Often the staff members write proposals, too; the special education teacher secured a $1,000 grant, awarded to alumni of her university for special projects, to start a lending library specifically for handicapped children. The family advocates applied successfully for a $3,000 grant to bring Appalachian arts and cultural activities to the preschool program. Parents are also a source of ideas for grants: one parent suggested the formation of reading circles, involving parents and children, and, with a group of parents, the parent coordinator wrote an "emergent literacy" mini-grant proposal.

Funding is a constant issue in program implementation. The state's allotted figure per student enrollment is $2,285; local districts are concerned that this figure has not increased in three years. It does not cover costs adequately, and the district has to pick up part of the building and transportation expenses. Similarly, the Family Resource Centers are not being funded at the levels the school districts anticipated, nor is there assurance that funding will increase to support salary increases for family advocates. However, Covington has benefitted by the flexible design of state initiatives. KERA's guidelines were broadly written and gave local programs the chance to be creative. According to the Biggs Center's director:

> "The state didn't have a plan saying that this is how the program should look and this is how you should do it... I saw that as a real plus, because the fact is nobody really knew how to do it out there. So they [state administrators] gave us the freedom to experiment, and the things we did were a little bit unorthodox, such as the Mom's Make-Over and Mom's Evening Out."

Collaboration with Community Agencies

Through Kentucky's education reform, school districts enjoy an unprecedented opportunity to operate early childhood programs with comprehensive educational, health, and social services. The Covington partnerships vary in the complexity of service arrangements. At one end of the spectrum, the school district's collaboration with Children, Inc. encompasses the management and operation of the early childhood center and is formalized through a written contract. At the other end, collaboration occurs through informal networking, with family advocates referring families to community services and seeing that they are obtained. In between lie formal agreements to undertake various short-term or joint activities.

The activities of the Family Resource Center provide examples of the service agreements between the school district and local agencies that use community funding and in-kind resources:

- The preschool is a site for the Intergenerational Health Promotion Grant of the Northern Kentucky District Health Department. The health department recruits and trains senior citizens to conduct health sessions with the preschoolers. The sessions include topics such as hand washing, tooth brushing, safety and injury prevention, nutrition, and building self-esteem.

- The Committee for Kids, Inc. provides an on-site Nurturing Program for families with children ages four to 12. While parents attend the sessions, children are involved in learning experiences as well. At least one-half of the slots for the program, held twice a year, are available to the parents of enrolled preschool children. The early childhood center in turn recruits families for the program, pays their tuition, and provides the classroom space and support staff to open and close the building in the evening.

- The Northern Kentucky University Reentry Center provides an instructor and instructional materials for a JOBS workshop. The program is offered once a year, running half-days for a three-week period. The early childhood program recruits participants for the program, offers counseling support through the family advocates, and provides classroom space, drop-in child care, and transportation via school bus for the parents.

These collaborative initiatives work because community providers share a strong commitment to children. The executive director of the Northern Kentucky Family Health Center believes that the successful integration of health services with the Biggs Center came from the common purpose of administrators and staff to raise healthy children. He says:

> "Underpinning our efforts was the commitment to children. That was paramount. There was an orientation that no problems were insurmountable, that we would work to come up with alternatives, so that at the end the children would get the quality care they needed. However, I would not want to underplay the difficulties of our first year -- there were questions of liability, legal problems and even the logistics of moving people from the Center to our clinic [which was not across the street from the Center at that time]. Financially, nobody was making money on this thing. If there was no commitment it would have been easy to say within six months, 'This isn't worth it,' and then just let things slide."

Covington is a relatively small community, which has facilitated networking between the school district and community agencies, especially the smaller nonprofit organizations. These interpersonal connections are important for developing agreements to be implemented through Family Resource Centers, which the state is promoting. Unfortunately, the family advocates find it noticeably more difficult to work with larger bureaucracies such as the state social service agency. Advocates recount:

> "Even though we've made a number of efforts to have them know we're here they don't see us as a potential part of their plan for families."
>
> "We try to develop relationships so that we can work together; oftentimes, I think the nature of the law prevents them from cooperating."

Although the advocates see themselves as a resource to help social workers communicate with families, to provide support and bring families to appointments, they realize that confidentiality rules prevent state social workers from working closely with the Family Resource Center -- even though they are funded by the same state agency, the Cabinet of Human Resources. The advocates recognize that the state social service agency has a high turnover, too, and thus find it a challenge to keep state staff informed of the Center's existence. The advocates attend state-sponsored meetings that bring together the Family Resource Centers and social workers, and they continue their outreach to public agencies in the hopes that they will be able to improve communication and encourage mutual exchange of services.

One of the more difficult relationships the preschool program has encountered has been with Head Start, located in a town next to Covington. The Head Start program has served low-income children and families in the area since the 1960s. It serves 350 children in three neighboring counties in a double-session part-day program. The agency added 35 children in 1992 and plans to apply for funding for an additional 80 children next year. Although the state preschool program has recruited children who were not being served by Head Start, the potential for competition has been unsettling to Head Start. (In 1993-94, 26 out of 29 four-year-old children on the Covington school district waiting list were eligible for Head Start and were referred to that agency.)

The director of Northern Kentucky Head Start, who has worked with its local program for the past 16 years, shares a variety of reactions to the state's early childhood initiative and the Covington program:

> "Dealing one-on-one with the school people, we do fine, but the Head Start community still has mixed feelings about this initiative. One aspect which amazes me is the press coverage which describes KERA as a pioneering effort in early childhood education -- when Head Start's been working with these children for decades! There are turf problems when two agencies are out there battling to recruit the same children and both are under pressure for numbers from funding agencies. For example, if we don't keep our attendance level at 85 percent on average, we could lose some funds. There is a big overlap between the Head Start poverty guidelines and the KERA program which uses the USDA school lunch guidelines. If the school program had focused on families above the poverty level, there would be more cohesiveness and less competition."

This director continues, describing Head Start's efforts to collaborate with local schools in response to KERA:

> "Head Start leaders were involved in discussions about KERA at the state level. The program design is based strongly on Head Start's performance standards. However, there wasn't much advance information available to people in communities. When we first heard about that state funding I sent a letter to each of the school districts in our area, asking them to lunch and posing the question of what this means for you and for us. And we are doing joint recruitment in Covington this year (but I'm not sure how that really will work when we are sitting at tables right next to each other and parents approach us).

The Covington preschool management feels Head Start programs have been isolated in terms of service delivery and have lacked the incentive to develop collaborative programs with community agencies. It would like to see some kind of combined program, but steps toward that goal have not been taken. The director of the Biggs Center believes the state has a role to play: she would like the state coordinator for the four-year-old program to invite a group of preschool administrators and Head Start directors to meet and discuss ways of working together.

* * *

The most unique aspect of the Covington program's organizational strategy is its management structure. Under the inspiration of Superintendent Biggs, oversight and guidance by the triad of consultant, director, and project leader is effective; collaborative management encourages different perspectives, making for a healthy and creative team approach.

Management and staff are close-knit -- even the custodians and secretaries share the philosophy of working with families. The staff feels at ease with administrators, who aim to be accessible and nurturing. This similar orientation and the accepting attitude toward experimentation empower the staff and encourage individual cooperation and flexibility. This atmosphere eases the difficulty of having to navigate between the dual lines of authority.

The management structure also supplied the flexibility needed to staff the program in such a way that the program itself was economically feasible. Allowing staff to apply for grants not only brings in extra funds, it fosters program innovation and ownership. The Biggs Center uses its resources wisely and draws on the strengths of other organizations to deliver complementary services.

CONCLUSION

Kentucky's legislation laid the framework and set the expectations for child-oriented learning activities, the home-school approach, and working with existing preschool programs to meet the nonacademic needs of children and families to enhance school success. While KERA set the tone for quality and comprehensiveness, the Covington preschool program owes much to the leadership of the school district's Superintendent Biggs. His vision to "nurture the whole child" through the home-school team was made concrete through an uncommon partnership: a school-run program carried out by a nonprofit organization. In addition, he saw the preschool program as a vital entryway for parents and children into the public school system.

The contractual arrangement between the Covington school district and Children, Inc. reflects the district's choice not to reinvent the wheel: Covington made use of an existing community resource to offer quality care and early childhood education. The potential exists for Children, Inc. to expand its role to further complement the aims and needs of the school system. One possibility is to extend the scope of the school-home partnership downward, to children from birth to age three. Another involves helping working parents by providing continuous care through a combination of half-day preschool and a child care facility. Still another option is reaching upward to school-age children with before and afterschool programs.

Another issue that emerges from the Covington example is the limiting impact of eligibility criteria. On the one hand, there is competition for targeted populations; on the other hand there are unserved and underserved groups that fail to meet income eligibility guidelines but are just as needy of early childhood education. Under the present system, Covington parents of limited means must pin their hopes on their child performing poorly on a Chapter 1 screening test in order to get into the preschool program.

The cooperative and balanced partnership between the school district and Children, Inc. stands in contrast to the strained relationship between these entities and Head Start. This unfortunate situation can be traced to the fragmentation of state and federal programs for children. While the Covington-Children, Inc. partnership has been beneficial to many families, it is insufficient to the larger challenge of planning and funding services for all the children in the community. Covington needs an overarching governing entity -- with an inclusive representation of community members and institutions -- to develop and implement a children's agenda that transcends the interests of any one program or agency.

JERSEY CITY, N.J. EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

"An Urban School District's Early Childhood Initiative"

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Director	Patricia Noonan
Year Opened	1989
Number of Children Served	400
1994-1995 Budget	$2.75 million
Primary Funding Source	Local Board of Education State Department of Education

POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- Jersey City's early childhood initiative has expanded from an initial state-funded program for 150 children to a program serving 400 children, with the majority of resources provided from local education agency funds. The state program served as a catalyst for local investment of over $1.8 million annually and a framework for defining key elements of a high quality, comprehensive program for children and families. The preschool classrooms are integrated into the operations of several elementary schools; dispersing them geographically makes the program more convenient for parents.

- Jersey City's program grew during a period of crisis and radical change for the total school system. The school district was taken over by the state as a result of severe problems of low performance and fiscal mismanagement. This process worked to the benefit of the early childhood initiative, as the state-appointed superintendent was a crucial supporter in garnering local funding, facilities, and cooperation from principals and other administrators.

- Program leadership collaborate effectively within the school district and across the community. Jersey City has adopted a consistent, developmentally appropriate framework for instruction and professional development from prekindergarten through second grade. Program managers also work actively with Head Start in coordinating funding, recruitment, and location of program sites, as well as with other health and family service agencies in helping families obtain comprehensive services.

INTRODUCTION

Jersey City's prekindergarten program is an example of how to start, expand, and institutionalize early childhood education in an urban public school system. To understand the unique evolution and direction of this public school-based program, one must remember two facts. First, the prekindergarten program was established at the same time that the entire school district entered a period of major overhaul, which led to reform of many types. Second, the prekindergarten program was defined from the outset as part of a continuous early childhood plan encompassing prekindergarten through third grade. Thus, when the program designers selected High/Scope as the developmentally appropriate curriculum, they knew a vital link between the prekindergarten program and the primary grades would be High/ Scope training for all teachers of those grades. The prekindergarten program also became the seeding ground for parent involvement in future grades.

Jersey City has a matrix of preschools, with funding provided by the state, the federal Head Start and Even Start programs, and the Jersey City school district. The state's GoodStarts program serves three- and four-year-olds. Head Start has the same audience, and the two programs have collaborated to decrease competition and ensure as many children as possible receive services (Head Start takes more of the three-year-olds, while the Jersey City program takes more four-year-olds). Even Start serves some four-year-olds and five-year-olds. In 1994 Jersey City had 27 prekindergarten classrooms in the public school system (19 district, 5 GoodStarts, 3 Even Start).

In this case study we focus on the public school system's prekindergartens as a unified entity. Although the program was funded initially by the state, the school district has steadily increased its share of responsibility for funding. Today the prekindergartens are supported primarily by the district, with a small number of state-supported and Even Start classrooms. There are no appreciable differences between the state- and locally-funded classrooms and activities, other than eligibility criteria, some health-related requirements, and home visits, which are mandated for the families in the state-funded classrooms and done only on request for the parents in the district-funded program. Even Start classrooms differ only in that parents are expected to take part in an adult literacy component. Otherwise, the classrooms reflect the same service strategy regardless of funding stream, with staffing, materials, field trips, and parent involvement activities the same for all enrollees.

We begin this case study by discussing the unusual policy context in which the prekindergarten program was developed, and Jersey City's abundance of family and community needs. Then we describe the program's services: after the initial recruitment, offerings include classroom-based early childhood services, access to a wide array of health and social services, and transition activities. Parents also have several vehicles for program involvement, including advisory roles and actual classroom participation. The program also provides opportunities for parent education. The second part of this study looks at the prekindergarten's organizational strategy to see how the district implements the program. Specifically, we look at program management, collaboration, staffing, and funding. We conclude with a look at some of the factors that made the program work and the most important issues it faces in the future.

Program Inception

Jersey City began its prekindergarten program in 1989 using state Urban Preschool Pilot Program funds. As one of only three grantees in the state, the district's program served 150 at-risk three- and four-year-olds. Significantly, the prekindergarten program started within the context of larger reforms and changes in the district. Also in 1989, the State of New Jersey took control of the Jersey City school district because of charges that the district had become corrupt and inefficient to the point that it was not educating its students. Student performance and staff morale were at a low; even the buildings were neglected. A State District Superintendent of Schools stepped in to run the district with several major goals, including to overhaul the district's central administration, install quality leadership and management, and update the facilities.

In 1990 the district provided funding for 72 more children, and in 1991 the state funded an additional 72 slots, bringing the total to 294. The district dramatically increased its commitment in 1992, funding 310 prekindergarten slots; at the same time, the state decreased its funding to cover just 84 children. Thus, within a four-year period, the number of children served almost tripled, and the initiative went from a an entirely state-funded program to a primarily locally-supported one.

Also in 1992, the state's Urban Preschool Pilot program ended and was replaced by GoodStarts. The GoodStarts grant carries with it requirements for eligibility, classroom environment, parent participation, social service offerings, and staffing. With the exception of the eligibility criteria, home visiting and some health requirements, the district runs its GoodStarts classrooms and other prekindergarten classrooms alike, using the GoodStarts requirements for teacher/child ratios and other quality indicators in each classroom. The Jersey City prekindergarten program is based on the mandated goals and philosophy of the state's GoodStarts program and the federal Even Start program:

- Expand opportunities for low-income three- and four-year-old urban children to participate in effective prekindergarten programs that offer comprehensive child and family services.

- Foster collaborative planning among local public school systems, Head Start programs, and other service providers to assure a smooth transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten and a continuity of services.

- Improve early childhood programs in prekindergarten through Grade 2 through professional development, staff training and collaborative planning for curriculum development, instructional practices and assessments.

Getting school employees to accept the concept of early childhood education was difficult initially. Most of the principals did not ask for a prekindergarten to be put in their buildings, and teachers did not ask to teach it. Director Pat Noonan says:

> "It was a who-lost-and-got-stuck-with-the-prekindergarten? mentality. Principals complained, 'Three-year-olds cry all the time. They get sick a lot, and that will bring down my school attendance records. How will I get them out for a fire drill? Why are there two prekindergarten teachers in a classroom when my fourth grade has 34 kids and one teacher?' However, some things that were considered to be a problem have turned out to be something very special to schools. Principals now want the prekindergartens in their buildings. And the eighth graders coming down from the third floor help take the three-year-olds out of the building during fire drills."

Each prekindergarten is associated with a specific school. Because of space problems, the program has had to create classrooms in community settings. There are now two classrooms in public housing projects, one in two apartments that were formerly occupied by the parole board. The Associate Superintendent knew the Executive Director of the Housing Authority and made arrangements for the district to rent the space when the parole board vacated. The school district made renovations worth $300,000 to the units and also pays $600 a month in rent. This space holds 20 kindergarten and 14 prekindergarten children, as well as a parent lounge where parenting classes are given. Off-site prekindergartens are popular; a local community organization is building a community center and has requested a separate district prekindergarten class there.

Though the state funding for Jersey City's prekindergarten program was completely independent of the takeover, the takeover influenced the attitudes of district employees. They were more willing to try new things and make parents and the community more active partners in education. The director had to work hard to convince many of the principals and teachers that it was time to rethink the traditional curriculum. The district decided to use the High/Scope curriculum, rooting it in the prekindergarten and then disseminating it to the primary grades. Teachers and principals were not used to the district having a "common" philosophy of education; but the tactic of rolling out the curriculum at all the elementary schools simultaneously made its acceptance more likely.

Family and Community Needs

In 1992 the state superintendent wrote:

> "Jersey City has always been a town that rides the crest of the waves riding through urban America at any given moment. It was at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution in the 1850s, the machine system of politics near the turn of the century, urban decay starting in the 1960s, and gentrification in the early 1980s."

Jersey City has for decades been the home of newly arrived immigrant groups and this has intensified since 1970, with ethnic and racial groups now comprising the majority of the city's more than quarter-million residents. Jersey City's median household income is the lowest in metropolitan New York, and two thirds of students qualify for bilingual or compensatory education. Jersey City's unemployment and poverty rates are higher than the rest of Hudson County, and the city also has the second highest AIDS rate in the U.S.

In New Jersey, a state with basically small school districts, Jersey City ranks second in size next to Newark. It has 28 elementary schools (prekindergarten through Grade 8). Statistics show a school population in need of special services. For the 1991-1992 school year, 1,467 out of 2,537 kindergarten students were assessed to be eligible for Chapter 1 Special Compensatory Education. Many five-year-olds were entering kindergarten at a developmental age of three and more than half the third grade students were performing below that level.

Jersey City's proposal to the state for receiving GoodStarts prekindergarten funding listed several critical issues for families in Jersey City:

- A significant increase in female headed households
- An especially large number of residents on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)
- Employment rates and literacy levels below desired
- High number of limited English proficiency adults and children (and many immigrants may be illiterate in their native language)

Even though the Jersey City Head Start grantee serves about 800 children from ages three to five in 19 different sites, demand for the prekindergarten exceeds space by more than two to one.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Recruitment of Families

When beginning the pilot program, the director had limited time in which to recruit, and classes did not fill until the middle of the year. Program staff sent out flyers to churches, put up posters, and advertised on cable television (they have since realized most of their target families do not have cable). The preschool teachers, nurse, and social worker went to different agencies to recruit, and the school principal recruited younger siblings of enrolled students.

Today the prekindergarten program is heavily advertized, as the district wants to attract the hard- to-reach segments of the population. Advertisements in both English and Spanish are put in local newspapers. Posters are put in schools, churches, housing projects, and community agencies. And, since the director hopes to reach families that do not respond to print information, she sends social workers to the mail rooms of housing projects on the day welfare checks arrive to tell residents about the program. Staff people also knock on doors, asking whether families have young children, and go to local shelters to find families with children. The school district works with REACH, the state's welfare to work program, and the Division of Youth and Families Services to identify families appropriate for the program.

To get into a Goodstarts classroom, children must meet at least two at-risk criteria:

- The family receives public assistance or has an adjusted family income at or below federal income poverty guidelines.
- The child is abused and neglected or at risk of such and has received child protective services.
- The child is from a family experiencing social problems that have been documented by a school or social service agency. The extensive list of problems experienced by child or parent ranges from nutritional deficiency, to chronic illness, destructive or violent temperament, adolescent parent, substance abuse or addiction, domestic violence, and homelessness.
- The child has a handicapping condition, and the child's IEP indicates GoodStarts as an appropriate prekindergarten setting.

Eligibility is determined by tax returns and Medicaid number, written documentation from the Division of Youth and Family Services, and statements by qualified professionals that a child is at-risk or has handicapping conditions.

After applications for the prekindergarten are received, the children are prioritized in terms of at-risk criteria. Those meeting the requirements for GoodStarts are further screened for that program, which includes a private meeting with the parents to verify application information. Then the children's visual-motor integration, language and speech development, fine and gross motor skills, and social skills are evaluated. Finally, the recruitment subcommittee of the district's Program Advisory Committee, the program director, and Head Start staff select the final GoodStarts participants. A waiting list is maintained ranked by severity of need and date of application. Some of these children may end up in the Department of Youth and Family Services-run day care centers.

Since demand so overwhelming exceeds the supply, the remainder of the prekindergarten classes are filled through a lottery system, developed as an equitable way to parcel out the slots. The lottery is also an effective public relations tool, as it makes being chosen a valued prize. The four-year-old applicants are divided into zip codes and by which school they would attend; then a lottery is done for the prekindergarten classes in each school. A sign of the intense need for the program, security is provided during the lottery in case losers get upset. District staff used to pull the numbers, but, rather than be challenged by the adults, now let children draw the numbers. There are Jersey City principals and high level administrators whose children did not win places through the lottery, thus publicly affirming the objectivity of the system.

Classroom-Based Early Childhood Services

The atmosphere of the classrooms is influenced somewhat by the severe space restraints of the district and the difficulty of finding suitable space for the prekindergartens, which must be on the first or basement floors. The prekindergarten classrooms, whether funded by GoodStarts or district funds, have the same environment and quality standards. The teacher-to-child ratio is roughly the same in all classes, 2:15 (three-year-old class) and 2:18 (four-year-old class), as stipulated by the GoodStarts grant.

All the prekindergarten classes use the developmentally appropriate High/Scope curriculum, which guides teaching strategies and activities for children. Classrooms have learning centers and a combination of child- and teacher-initiated activities. The curriculum revolves around self-development and family life; social and emotional development and development of values; cognitive skills; and motor development. Preschoolers have journals in which they can develop their writing skills, from scribbles to letters to words. Language development through a print-rich environment and exposure to a broad range of children's literature is a cornerstone of the High/Scope curriculum.

A typical day in a classroom following the High/Scope model might be as follows:

> The classroom theme is Thanksgiving. There is a tepee set up in the middle of the room, made out of sheets decorated by the children. Many books about Thanksgiving and Native Americans are scattered about. Objects in the room are clearly labeled, one of several devices in the room to encourage early reading skills. There is a cozy reading corner with a huge stuffed gorilla to sit on; some children read to dolls. The class also has two computers and an old record player. The classroom has a teacher, an assistant teacher, and a student teacher. At the start of circle time, the teacher takes attendance by holding up a child's first name and waiting for that child to recognize it. Then she puts up a big easel labeled "Daily News," and children report whatever news there is, such as, "I watched Full House last night," and the teacher writes it down. Following the day's theme, the teacher asks, "What do you remember about Thanksgiving?" With prompting, the children remember curious facts, such as that a baby was born on the Mayflower.

Non-English speaking preschoolers are put into classrooms, without bilingual instruction. Teachers aides usually speak Spanish, but some children speak other foreign languages. For the most part, the children do learn an acceptable amount of English; unfortunately, they often lose it over the summer, and the kindergarten teacher has to begin again.

The program also emphasizes early detection of learning disabilities so that difficulties are not left for later in the child's school career. The district provides space for physically disadvantaged children to participate in combined activities with the rest of their prekindergarten counterparts. It has special education programs for developmentally handicapped preschoolers at eight schools across the district for six hours per day.

Because the district recognizes that the school is the "primary provider of enrichment to children" in Jersey City, it gives the prekindergarten funding to organize four field trips per year. Children enrolled in GoodStarts also receive two home visits per year by a family advocate. The family advocate observes the child first in school to see what the parent needs to work on with the child at home. Family advocates show parents games that they can make in their home with inexpensive materials, as well as other activities to further their child's educational goals. Teachers appreciate the family advocates:

> "They can give parents some ideas of how to deal with behavior problems. We can separate ourselves... We'll keep a log of the problems in the classroom and then we'll pass that information on to the home visitor, who takes care of the situation."

The school district also offers an afterschool "latchkey" program for children from prekindergarten to Grade 5. The Childcare After-School Program for Enrichment and Recreation (CASPER) is located at those schools that house GoodStarts classrooms and provides afterschool day care with educational activities such as music, dance, and drama. Parents who work or are in school or training can enroll their prekindergarteners in CASPER for free. Hours of operation are 7:45-830 a.m. and 2:45-5:45 p.m.

Health Services

Providing health services to the prekindergarten children is a major goal of the prekindergarten program. Health services are available to all the children; in addition, a GoodStarts health services advisory subcommittee, composed of staff, local providers, and parents of enrolled children, has a specific goal to make certain that health services are provided in a continuous manner from prekindergarten to Grade 2.

Within 90 days of being enrolled, all GoodStarts children must receive a comprehensive health screening and physical exam. The school district has taken the lead in extending that requirement, making arrangements with the Jersey City Health Center and Horizon's Health Center to carry out these exams for each prekindergarten class. The prekindergarten teachers bring their classes to a clinic, which does the exams for the whole class in one day. Parents are invited, and if they come the clinic staff will give them a hepatitis shot. Most of these children are eligible for Medicaid, and the school helps reduce the cost to the clinic by having the school nurse does the Medicaid paperwork. The cost of a check-up for a child who is not eligible for Medicaid is $30 and is paid by the program.

Children in GoodStarts must have all immunization shots and continue receiving boosters shots. Boosters are not given at the class checkups, and the school nurse will remind parents to take their children in for the shots before kindergarten. The GoodStarts health coordinator talks to mothers about breast cancer checks, maternal care, and lead poisoning (lead screening takes place at the school). The school nurse will do home visits to talk further with parents about these issues.

Board-certified dentists provide dental exams and services to the prekindergarteners. The prekindergarten health coordinator and the Regional Dental Health Coordinator teach dental hygiene in the classrooms. Children brush their teeth in school as part of their daily routine. Parents also may take their children to the New Jersey Dental Clinic, the state dental school in Newark, for free treatment. Although there are several dentists who take Medicaid, they are hard to find. Efforts are underway to solicit private dentists to "adopt" a prekindergarten class.

Nutrition is a major part of the district's strategy for improving the health of the young children. The federal school lunch program gives children breakfast, lunch, and a snack. The prekindergarten program holds a series of family nutrition training workshops, using paraprofessional family nutritionists from the Rutgers University Cooperative Extension Service. The prekindergarten nutrition educator also does workshops for parents on cooking, diet, and the best way to cook on a food stamps budget. Sometimes as a result of these classes, parents discover they have a health problem such as diabetes.

Each year the program sponsors a Health and Nutrition Fair at one school. This all-day event for children and parents includes representatives of more than 30 local agencies and organizations. Children participate in activities related to nutrition and sanitation, and parents can obtain blood pressure checks and information on prenatal care and immunizations.

Health education starts early in the Jersey City schools. Primary Babes is a drug prevention program for the prekindergarten level; its consultants conduct a six-week course funded by Hudson County Substance Abuse. (AIDS education begins in kindergarten.) Outside counselors come to the prekindergarten classes to meet with teachers and students to discuss child assault prevention. If a child confides in a teacher about abuse in the home, the teacher brings in the school nurse. Noting that the role of the school has changed, one teacher says:

> "We used to be the place that taught children how to read and now we are supposed to be preventing terrible things from happening in their homes."

Transition to Kindergarten

A majority of the students in a prekindergarten class in a given school will matriculate into the kindergarten class in that school, which greatly eases transition concerns for parents and students. In some of the schools, the prekindergarten and kindergarten classes are housed very close together. In order to facilitate the transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten, the children and their parents visit the kindergarten classrooms they will be attending the next fall the spring before and meet with the teachers. Early orientation sessions are offered to GoodStarts parents on kindergarten and the child care services offered there. The summer before kindergarten, parents receive booklets with ideas on how they can work with their child prior to kindergarten entry.

The GoodStarts health and social service coordinators talk to the elementary school nurse or early childhood social workers about the social service needs of each of the GoodStarts children as they enter kindergarten. With parental consent, the children's forms are forwarded to the elementary school. GoodStarts children have priority for the Even Start kindergarten classes (which in turn gives them priority for a spot in CASPER). The GoodStarts supervisor continues to monitor the GoodStarts children when they are in kindergarten. Throughout the year, the kindergarten teachers fill out questionnaires about the children and carry out informal and formal assessments. Bilingual and ESL classes are available for children who do not pass language competency tests at the kindergarten level. The school district works very closely with the parents of children with developmental disabilities, regardless of the preschool program they come from.

Increasingly, the kindergarten through Grade 2 use the High/Scope curriculum, which has resulted in concrete changes above the prekindergarten level. For instance, kindergarten no longer uses report cards with letter grades, standardized tests, or workbooks. There is a new cohesiveness between prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, as they are trained in High/Scope and whole language together.

An additional strategy for working on issues of program continuity is a set of seven school-level Transition Committees, composed of representatives of Head Start, child care agencies, prekindergarten, kindergarten, first, and second grade staff members and parents. Each committee is developing strategies to assist children and parents in preparing for kindergarten and primary grade experiences.

Parent Involvement and Family Support Services

Parental involvement is an integral part of the prekindergarten program, which has adopted the state's GoodStarts guidelines for local programs regarding parents' inclusion in the prekindergarten experience. Sites must provide:

- A planned program of experiences, constructive involvement, and activities which support and enhance the parental role as the principal influence in their child's education and development.
- A program that recognizes the parents/guardians as: responsible guardians of their children's well being; prime educators of their children; and essential to the success of GoodStarts, both in working with their own children and in cooperating with GoodStarts staff.
- Information for parents about a wide array of family support services, including training and employment services, facilitate their access to them, and follow up to ascertain appropriate next steps

At a minimum, activities include two home visits per year; two or more parent/teacher conferences per year; opportunities for parents to be in the classroom as volunteers, observers, or paid employees; special opportunities for involvement, such as accompanying classes on field trips; parent-developed activities; and a parent resource room or other space where parents can meet informally and read material pertinent to childrearing.

Jersey City fulfills these obligations with the following activities (among many others): a "typical day in a preschool" class; math workshops for parents to understand the math curriculum; folktales from the various cultures represented in the school population; GED classes; regular press releases and a quarterly newsletter to parents of preschool children; parent corners in the classrooms with information about educating children; and an annual family picnic organized by the parents.

The program is also responsive to the parents, and through actual experience parents understand that they have a voice in the school and are taken seriously. For example, at the start of the prekindergarten program, parents successfully protested that the children's were napping on mats on a basement floor. The parents insisted that the room have cots instead, and all of the other centers followed suit. As a result of this incident, one parent says:

> "I think that made us really buy into the program, that we really felt like we did have some power and that people did listen to us. It carried through because we got involved in the parent's activity committee at the school, and the parent's council president began to say, 'Those prekindergarten parents are something else. They just get in there and they take charge, you know?'"

The program further enhances its partnership with parents by giving them the opportunity to have a role in the program's governance. The effort to incorporate parents into the school community goes beyond the classroom to official governance roles on several committees. One-quarter of the

GoodStarts Policy Advisory Board is made up of parents of children in prekindergarten through Grade 2. Each GoodStarts site has its own site committee, and parents hold positions there as well. Parents help develop the Parental Involvement Plan, which helps determine the interests of parents regarding their children and themselves and designs appropriate activities.

The developmentally appropriate curriculum to which Jersey City is committed is sometimes a new and bewildering situation for parents who may recall their own early childhood education of flashcards and sitting at desks. The director feels that initially parents enroll their children in the program based on the assumption that,

> "Because it is run by a public school district, we will be teaching letters of the alphabet, teaching how to read, doing all those inappropriate things. So, we tell them that we share the same philosophy and do the same thing as Head Start."

Parents report that the teachers have done a good job of communicating their educational plan to them. Parents are invited to symposia conducted by the prekindergarten teachers to talk about early childhood programs and what happens in their developmentally appropriate classrooms. One strategy utilized by a prekindergarten teachers was particularly effective. In order to demonstrate the importance of allowing children to do their own creative work and problem solving, parents were split into two groups to do an art activity. One group was instructed in the old-fashioned way, told to stay within the lines as they colored the teacher's design. The other group was given free rein with finger paints to make their own creation at their own speed. The parents recognized that the group given fewer directions learned more and enjoyed the learning process more. The director describes the parents' reaction:

> "It worked real well. For some of the parents, it was the first time they had experienced paint like that... They were besides themselves [with] fingerpaint, mushing it around and having a grand old time. You know, most of our parents probably would not have had that experience in the past."

Parents were informed of the mechanics of a new report card used in developmentally appropriate classrooms and were asked for feedback on the new format, which includes the parents' observations of their child's progress. Parents now understand that their children do not have to bring home a "finished product" everyday. Although the children get very little homework, what is sent home is always open-ended and requires family involvement, activities parent and child can share.

Parents are invited to participate in the prekindergarten classrooms at least once a week in activities such as cooking and music. There are weekly drop-in hours to visit the class and meet with the teacher, scheduled at different times to accommodate working parents. Many parents take part in activities first thing in the morning classroom, staying after dropping off their children off, drinking coffee, and working in the classroom. The teachers feel that having parents in the classroom reinforces their authority. They also state:

> "It is useful for the parents to see children teaching one another through a buddy system, because they can replicate this situation at home."

Because they are introduced to the curriculum, parents have an understanding of the inner workings of the classroom and an idea of how time is spent. Through class participation, parents see children learning to shape letters in shaving cream firsthand; they can watch children learn while playing. Parents may also participate in story hour, taking part in implementing whole language in the classroom. Says one staff member,

> "Establishing a workable level of rapport with parents is not always easy. Some parents feel threatened by the school environment because they may have had a poor school experience themselves. Any contact with the school must be inviting."

The program director wants parents to be able to go into classrooms and interact naturally with both children and teachers. To that end, she tries to hire a diverse support staff. If one person seems unapproachable, hopefully another will not. Every prekindergarten parent is invited to the school four times a year to discuss their child's progress. If parent cannot come to school, they schedule a home visit or telephone interview instead.

The Effective Parenting Information for Children (EPIC) program is a parenting education program designed to improve parenting skills, increase parents' confidence, bring parents together in ways that empowers them. EPIC holds meetings weekly to discuss a self-generated list of topics, such as parenting styles and decision making; the program offers activities centered around listening, problem solving, and communication. The meetings are facilitated by social workers, whom the parents view as enthusiastic and non-judgmental. Members of the group provide support and a sense of caring to one another, and parents are concerned when others miss meetings.

The director tells of how an EPIC group was helpful in assisting a parent go for health care:

> "One young mother was six months pregnant and had not received her prenatal care. But one of the mothers in the group worked it out that one of the parents brought her to the center while another parent took care of her other children."

Program leaders also ask participants to recount their own school experiences. This helps parents better understand their own past and preconceptions that affect how they play their role of being involved in their child's school and education.

The program lasts six weeks, though some families repeat the cycle more than once. Parents are recruited to EPIC through flyers distributed in classrooms inviting them to come to a meeting. Principals' attitudes are considered integral to having a good turnout for EPIC, because schools that are welcoming to parents in general are more likely to encourage parents to enroll. Physical constraints may hinder participation in some cases. Some schools have better space than others to accommodate parent involvement activities. Dangerous neighborhoods can deter parent attendance as well. It has been suggested that the district develop EPIC group specifically for fathers, with a male facilitator.

The district also offers adult education to parents of children in the Even Start classrooms. Serving 35 families, Even Start requires parents to take part in the adult portion of the program and emphasizes adult literacy and early childhood education as a combined approach. The program provides GED and basic adult education at the Adult Learning Center and a public housing site; child care is free or subsidized. Adult education tends to occur on an individualized basis in order to accommodate the different circumstances and paces of the adults enrolled. When parents finish the educational component, they enter a job training and placement program. The adult education teachers also discuss good ways for parents to communicate with their child's teacher and how parents can help their child with homework.

Other services for parents include a Job Fair, which in the past offered a set of five small group sessions on skills such as resume writing, interviewing, and job search strategies. Session leaders presented information in both English and Spanish to meet the needs of as many parents as possible.

Participant Opinions and Outcomes

Due to the changes occurring in the Jersey City school district, there are many evaluations going on; several are targeted at the prekindergarten program. Doctoral students from Columbia University are doing an evaluation of 50 to 60 children who entered prekindergarten in 1992, comparing them with a control group. The objective is to see how the children are faring as second graders and whether students who participated in the High/Scope prekindergarten program prove more successful throughout their school careers. If the study can show positive trends with children as they enter first, second, and third grade, correlating developmentally appropriate practices with higher test scores, then the program is more likely to receive support for broader implementation.

Jersey City administers the Brigance test, a well-regarded developmental screening test, to all children as they enter kindergarten. The Brigance shows how much a child knows compared with what all five-year-olds "should" know. Those students who went through a variety of neighborhood preschool programs scored 61 on average, while those who participated in the district prekindergarten program scored 79 on average. By the end of first grade, those who did not attend prekindergarten scored an average 79, while the prekindergarten group scored an average 94. Obviously, quantifiable measures such as these substantiate the case for continued expansion of the prekindergarten program.

Jersey City also provides information on its GoodStarts program to the state. The Department of Education asks for the following information: baseline screening data for selected children; prekindergarten attendance records; teacher and parental reports on academic performance and children's interests; levels of parental participation in the school; readiness assessment results for kindergarten entry; and data on the collaboration between the local education agency, the local Head Start agency, and other community agencies to plan the GoodStarts program. This data contributes to reporting on the status and accomplishments of the overall state initiative.

In addition to the formal evaluation efforts, kindergarten teachers report a marked increase in parent involvement due to the prekindergarten program, and parents provide positive comments, such as:

> "He says to me, 'Mom are you going to school today?' We sit down together and do our homework together, and if he sees me involved and wanting to learn (and you know, he looks at me as an adult), then that's going to make him want to learn even more."
>
> "Mary is a social worker, but she is also like a confidant. They make me realize that teaching doesn't stop in school, but you also have to continue it at home after the school bell rings. And I also enjoy the home visits that we get from Joyce."

* * *

One of the greatest hopes for the prekindergarten program is that it will cement a partnership between the families and the school district that will continue through the upper grades. To do this, parents must be made to feel as comfortable as possible in the school, with the staff, with the curriculum, and with their own parenting skills. Program staff understand that this partnership is also key to maintaining the popularity of the prekindergarten program within the community at large. Realizing that the overwhelming range of problems in Jersey City's children could never be solved by the school alone, the prekindergarten program took the lead in the district in developing school/family/community linkages. It is hoped that parents brought into the school during their child's early years will be a new generation of involved parents throughout their child's school careers.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Program Management

The Jersey City Prekindergarten Program is run by the Jersey City School District. In the 1989 takeover of the Jersey City School District, prekindergarten through third grade was reorganized into a cohesive Early Childhood Unit. A new position was created, Early Childhood Supervisor, to coordinate staff development and curriculum planning for this unit. Patricia Noonan, the Urban Prekindergarten Program Director prior to the takeover, was appointed to this position. Noonan, a Jersey City native, began her career as a kindergarten teacher and was an elementary school assistant principal when the district received the Urban Preschool Program grant. In 1992, due to expansion of the program, Patricia Bryant, an Urban Prekindergarten teacher, and former Head Start teacher and administrator, was appointed Assistant Early Childhood Supervisor. Together, Noonan and Bryant are responsible for supervising 500 teachers from prekindergarten through third grade. Together they determine the curriculum for those grades, evaluate both tenured and non-tenured teachers, and design report cards and in-service activities. Among their many individual tasks, Ms. Noonan is responsible for grant writing; Ms. Bryant is a certified High/Scope Trainer and trains teachers and teacher aides in the High Scope model. She is also responsible for the transition program in these grades. Other tasks include maintaining records of parent involvement in the classroom for the Department of Education.

The state's GoodStarts program also requires the Jersey City School District to have a policy advisory board for the GoodStarts program in Jersey City. Representatives of community agencies compose three-quarters of the board; parents of children in prekindergarten through Grade 2 make up the rest. The board meets monthly for the first half of the year and bi-monthly after that. In addition to the policy advisory board, each GoodStarts center has a site advisory board consisting of parents of children currently enrolled in the program. A representative of each site advisory board sits on the policy advisory board.

Funding

The prekindergarten program has three major sources of funds: the district of Jersey City; the New Jersey Department of Education, which disperses GoodStarts monies; and the U.S. Department of Education's Even Start program. The GoodStarts grant gives the school district $1.4 million over two years. The Even Start program gives the school district $250,000 annually for four years. These entities do not pool their funds. Although 70 percent of the 27 classrooms are funded by the district, the program is managed as a unified entity; a teacher may teach a state- or federally-funded class one year and a district class the next, unaware of the funding source.

There is a widespread misconception in the district that money for the prekindergarten came *because* of the takeover. In fact, the takeover merely coincided with grant award. The takeover did effect fewer bureaucratic restrictions on how to spend monies in Jersey City's surplus accounts for new and needed programs. Thus the superintendent was able to draw on the funds when she decided to make prekindergarten a district priority. At the time of the takeover in 1989, the surplus was over $12 million. By the end of June 1992, it was down to $1.9 million.

The superintendent's emphasis on early childhood education enabled the prekindergarten to find adequate space for the program. Because prekindergarten is not mandated by the state, it does not have rights for rooms. A special education class of only a few students, on the other hand, would automatically have a room. After a prekindergarten classroom is found, it might need to be renovated; each room costs an approximate additional $10,000 to furnish.

The school district pays salary plus benefits for teachers and teachers' aides, $36,000 and $15,000, respectively. Other district expenses include a hot lunch program and utilities. Over the years, the number of classrooms in the program has grown, and the district has steadily increased its contribution to the prekindergarten program. The state superintendent is credited with setting the stage for district financial support for program. The director says:

> "She firmly believed, as did the whole administrative staff, that an early childhood program is the way to go... If we do not provide our children with a strong foundation, then all the money that we spend everywhere else is just kind of wasted."

GoodStarts is a finite program, and the prekindergarten director needs to plan for the end of this funding stream. She is counting on another state program to replace it or a federal program to apply for. Regardless, she remains confident that the district will help make up the shortfall, as current levels of local funding highlight the district's commitment to the program. In the 1994-1995 school year, the director estimates that the Jersey City school district is investing more than $1.7 million in salaries and fringe benefits for classroom staff and family advocates for the early childhood program. In addition, the district provides over $100,000 for supplies, training, field trips, and rent for classrooms in non-school buildings. Moreover, the district has spent substantial sums on purchasing portable classroom units (at an estimated cost of $450,000), installing bathrooms in every classroom used by preschoolers, and renovating classroom space in several public housing units.

Given the multiple demands for resources in any public school system, these are remarkable allocations. The director credits the superintendent as a key force in the rapid expansion of local funding. In addition, the strategy of making locally-funded classrooms open to all families in the community helped to build support for the program, as did the widely publicized annual lottery to determine enrollees each year, which dramatized the popularity of this district initiative.

Staffing and Training

The GoodStarts grant comes with strict requirements for staffing. Each GoodStarts prekindergarten program must hire the following individuals:

- Director
- Paraprofessional staff, preferably with college credits in early childhood and at least one year of group teaching to children under six
- Health services coordinator
- Social services coordinator
- Nutrition and food services coordinator
- Parent involvement coordinator

Training is a high priority for GoodStarts and the Jersey City prekindergarten program. The state Department of Education provides two days of training for GoodStarts staff. It also requires prekindergarten teachers and supervisory staffs to attend three other days of training and a week-long session in the summer. Thus prekindergarten staff receives at least ten days of training per year. Training includes going to workshops and hearing outside speakers; it covers areas such as curriculum, parent involvement, and social services needs and linkages. In addition, teachers receive stipends of $20 per hour for attending workshops and classes when school is not in session; teacher's aides receives $10 per hour stipends.

The GoodStarts grant requires the district to design a staff development plan for prekindergarten through Grade 2 teachers for pre- and in-service training, usually based on a survey of teachers' training needs. The GoodStarts grant also has money in the budget to provide time for teachers to meet after school and plan transition activities. At least one staff member at each GoodStarts site is trained in CPR and first aid. Staff receives training in recognizing and dealing with cases of abuse and neglect, as well as how to access Family Net services for families. An early childhood library was developed to help keep teachers informed of the latest developments in the field.

GoodStarts funding pays for curriculum development and teacher training to expand the developmentally appropriate curriculum through the second grade. The program's assistant director, a certified High/Scope trainer, trains the program's early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals during the summer and after school during the school year. In addition to training the entire staff of prekindergarten teachers and assistant teachers, tne assistant director offers several workshop series for kindergarten and first grade staff members. Ultimately, the district hopes all primary grade teachers will be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Jersey City also cooperates with other local districts in planning staff development for primary grade teachers, such as a three-day workshop on approaches to integrated curriculum offered to Jersey City and Patterson, New Jersey staff members.

One principal remarks how training has helped the staff:

> "I found it difficult before the kindergarten and first grade teachers were trained in developmentally appropriate education, because they didn't understand the prekindergarten children when they came in their classes. Now these teachers understand that they must adapt to the children and not vice versa, and they are used to the idea of group activities and the verbal ability of these children."

Due to broad certification regulations, it has been a challenge for the program director to hire early education teachers with specific early childhood training. However, the fact that the prekindergarten teachers are paid on the same union scale as all other teachers in the district has helped attract quality early childhood teachers. Teachers' salaries start at over $30,000 per year, and the prekindergarten teachers acquire tenure and receive the same benefits as the kindergarten through 12th grade teachers. This is a very desirable and unusual situation for prekindergarten teachers (in contrast, Head Start teachers start at $19,500).

Program administrators want the staff to reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender composition of the community, though this has been difficult to accomplish. There is only one male prekindergarten teacher; and it is usually the teacher's aide, not the head teacher, who represents one of the community's different ethnic groups. Male home visitors only stretch resources, as they frequently must be accompanied to homes by a female staff member. Many teachers live outside of Jersey City, and the director encourages them to do errands and be visible in the community.

The developmentally appropriate early education (prekindergarten through Grade 2) is a force throughout the district. The next emphasis in the GoodStarts grant is to collaborate with the Division of Youth and Family Services Day Care Centers to encourage the use of developmentally appropriate curricula there.

Collaboration with Community Agencies

The state requires every GoodStarts child and family to have a social service assessment completed within 90 days of entry into the program. This assessment is based on admission documentation, classroom observations, home visits, and reports from referring agencies. GoodStarts has two social workers who do case management and work with the Jersey City Inter-Agency Collaborative Council. GoodStarts staff is responsible for following up on these needs and using the state's Family Net collaboration and other community resources to obtain services. They also work with four full-time social workers employed by the school district to provide comprehensive case management to all family members. There is also one "service broker" supporting one school. When she began her job, she wondered how she would get families in to see her. But word of mouth was sufficient; she sees five to seven parents a day, working until 6:00 p.m. Some come in response to staff referrals, other walk in on their own, and sometimes she asks to meet the parents of a student that has been sent to her. A principal says:

> "Nobody was aware of the seriousness of the problem. Nobody realized how desperate people were to come and talk to someone. I wonder how they survived before."

The broker's main responsibility is to connect the families of the students at school to any agencies or programs in the county that they could benefit from and then follow up on her referral. For example, many families do not know that, even if they are in the country illegally, the child can receive food stamps and free lunch. Another important responsibility is to identify gaps in services and accessibility problems and report these back to the program's Inter-Agency Task Force. She also organizes service activities at the school, such as speakers for parents.

Leaders of the school district knew from outset that to begin the meet the needs of families with children of all ages, the district must involve community organizations. The main vehicle for school district/community partnership is the Jersey City Inter-Agency Collaborative Council. The council is the local Family Net organization, a greater collaborative effort underway in 30 special needs districts in New Jersey. The council's role is to facilitate and coordinate "child- and family- centered, comprehensive, preventive, and flexible" services for families. The prekindergarten director and social services coordinator sit on this council.

One of the council's first initiatives after the takeover was to form an inter-agency task force composed of representatives of human services agencies, the school district, and parents. To ensure that comprehensive services are provided to families involved in the program, prekindergarten staff collaborates with an array of local agencies, including the following groups, for services and referrals:

- Catholic Charities (for their shelter)
- Child Abuse Prevention Agency
- Community Child Care Coordinating Council
- Department of Youth and Family Services
- Head Start
- Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies
- Housing Authority
- Jersey City Health Center
- Milestones (for handicapped children)
- University of Medicine and Dentistry

The prekindergarten program also collaborates with St. Peter's College and Jersey City State College, which send student teachers to learn from practical experience in the early childhood setting.

The task force's goal is:

> "To establish needs within a specific setting and county agencies/resources in service of those needs. Depending on needs, services can be delivered within schools, within neighborhoods or within traditional agency settings."

The rationale behind locating service providers at schools is to enhance the educational setting by making it a place for students and parents to gain access to social and community services. It is likely that a pilot central service site will be established within one of the district's four school "clusters" to bring crisis and longer-term assistance services to students, parents, and school staff.

The prekindergarten and Head Start have an important relationship, and the prekindergarten takes their partnership seriously. When the district applied for the Urban Preschool Program, Head Start administrators wrote a letter of endorsement. When the district applied for GoodStarts funding, individuals at Head Start actually helped write the proposal. The prekindergarten and Head Start staff hold monthly meetings to plan transition and other activities.

The program director continues to work closely with the local Head Start agency and with child care centers in the community. During recruitment efforts, all families who are eligible, by income, to attend Head Start are referred to the Head Start office; Head Start staff members refer families to the school district program as well. In recent years, the school district has moved away from enrolling three-year-olds in its program in a coordinated effort as Head Start has opened additional classrooms to serve three-year-olds. In the early years of GoodStarts, all staff development programs were planned in collaboration with Head Start, and staff from both programs participated in workshops together. Based on this precedent, the director opens her training events to staff members from Head Start and other child care programs. Several current Head Start parents are participating in the adult literacy component of Even Start as well.

* * *

This prekindergarten program thrived because there was active support for it by both the superintendent and program administrators. The two levels of administration were equally vital for the success of the program. The director and assistant director's efforts in writing grant proposals and searching for adequate space would not have yielded as many results if the superintendent had not been as supportive as she was. Likewise, without quality front line workers like those directors, the superintendent's support for the prekindergarten would not have gone as far.

The director believes that the state takeover helped the program:

> "First of all, they made it their number one priority. They have given their support, but also put the money behind it, to extend the program and to do different things. When the superintendent said, 'Classes will be here, here and here,' they were here, here and here. If there are any problems that I can't solve on my level, then they will intercede for me."

Two challenges faced from the outset remain issues today, future funding and space. The challenge is to institutionalize the early education changes that have been made during the takeover: the creation of the prekindergarten program, the full day kindergarten, and the developmentally appropriate curriculum. The more these are seen as integral parts of the revamped district and not as expendable programs, the greater the survival chances during a new superintendent or after the takeover.

CONCLUSION

The 1989 takeover of the school district was scheduled to last five years. However, after a third year audit, consultants recommended the state extend the takeover an additional three years, because, though there has been substantial progress, there is still substantial opportunity for improvement. Meanwhile, the district is undergoing the gradual transition to local control of the schools. And the prekindergarten, aware that the GoodStarts funding is most likely temporary, plans for its funding future.

The school reform mandate in the takeover made it easier to try new programs and curricula, new ways of teaching and administering. Looking back, we see that the Urban Preschool Pilot program and the GoodStarts program were a powerful impetus for Jersey City's prekindergarten program and led to tremendous local investment. The two programs provided the operations and services framework that has been maintained as the program has shifted to a locally funded one. Program staff members will follow the precedent set by the GoodStart grant's requirements for high standards of classroom quality, parent involvement, social service linkages, and ongoing collaboration between the district prekindergartens and other preschools.

It was always understood that the prekindergarten could not be a stand-alone program, but must be integral to the entire school district. Viewing prekindergarten as the first step of a four-year developmentally appropriate curriculum strengthens the importance of this grade. In the long run, the program benefits the district by influencing not only test scores, but the social development of children, and by reaching children and families early in their school careers. When the district looked hard at its students, it saw many that had gone through grade after grade without the school addressing their needs for remedial academics and social problems. The prekindergarten program hopes to counter that trend with early education and parent involvement in the schools. The program also collaborates with a broad array of agencies with a goal of having community agencies become accustomed to and efficient at working with the school district to provide the services needed to help students and their families.

FAMILY AND CHILD EDUCATION - CANONCITO & TORREON, NM.

"Comprehensive Early Childhood Services for Native American Families"

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

BIA Project Officer	Patsy Jones
Year Opened	1991
Number of Children Served	151
1994-1995 Budget	$285,000 per site
Primary Funding Source	Bureau of Indian Affairs

POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- FACE is based on three national models (Parents as Teachers, Parent and Child Education, and High/Scope) which have been combined and adapted to meet the needs of Native American families. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and program model sponsors have shown admirable flexibility in responding to the needs of parents and communities and in incorporating tribal language, culture, and learning methods.

- The FACE program provides continuous support to families with children from birth to age 8, beginning with a home-based parent education for families with infants and toddlers. Three- and four-year-olds children attend preschool classroom, while the parents receive adult literacy training, and parent education - and both adults and children engage in daily parent and child interaction time. FACE also includes strategies to improve the transition of children and parents into the kindergarten program and staff development activities for teachers in primary grade classrooms.

- FACE defines eligibility for services generously: the home visiting offering is nearly universal, and the classroom-based family literacy component only asks that parents or family members desire to further their education and be willing to participate in developmental activities with their child.

- The BIA has made an impressive commitment to support program quality through extensive, sustained "at the elbow" training and technical assistance for staff. The BIA also facilitates networking across program sites by encouraging cross-site visits and holding national conferences annually.

INTRODUCTION

The Family and Child Education (FACE) program exemplifies how national early childhood education models can be implemented within culturally distinct communities. Under the sponsorship of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Washington, D.C., FACE offers family support and child development activities to Native American families with children from birth to school age. FACE combines home visiting, a preschool, and family literacy efforts. Beginning with programs in six Native American schools in 1991, in three years it grew to 21 school sites serving 471 families across the country. FACE tends to operate in small units, which allows staff to know families and each other well. Sites draw on extensive outside support from prominent training organizations, and an active BIA project officer provides oversight and assistance.

With funding going directly from the BIA to the schools (the state does not play an intermediary role), the FACE program combines three nationally known models:

- Parents as Teachers: Based in Missouri, PAT provides home-based parent education for parents of children from birth to age three.

- Family Literacy: First developed by the Parent and Child Education (PACE) program in Kentucky and now disseminated by the National Center for Family Literacy, this program offers adult education and sessions on parenting skills, along with preschool for three- and four-year-old children.

- The High/Scope Curriculum: Used in preschool classrooms to guide teaching strategies and activities for children, High/Scope focuses on developmentally appropriate learning.

The BIA's original idea of packaging a set of early childhood education and family support services was an effective way of meeting the needs of diverse populations; but local sites have improved upon FACE by adapting it to the people and conditions of their communities. The two sites in this case study, the Canoncito and Torreon schools in New Mexico,[1] have also worked to make the educational activities culturally appropriate by supporting Navajo childrearing practices and weaving Navajo language and tradition into preschool activities. Thus FACE sites are addressing issues of standardization versus flexibility, and effectively integrating cultural themes and practices into curriculum and teaching strategies.

In its emphasis on family strengths and parent involvement in a child's education, FACE works to reverse a lack of parent involvement in schools in Native American communities. In the past, particularly under the boarding school system, parents had no say about how their children were taught. "The system" instilled the idea that outsiders were the experts on educational matters. In contrast, FACE assumes that parents are a child's first teacher and affirms their primary role. It seeks to promote early and continuing parent involvement in child development and to create bridges, not barriers, between the home, school, and community. As the Canoncito and Torreon sites show, achieving these goals requires changing the way schools, families, and communities interact.

We begin this case study by discussing the policy context in which the FACE program was developed and family and community needs. Then we describe the program's services: after the initial recruitment, offerings include home visiting, family literacy, and a preschool. Parents may also participate in FACE's Parent Advisory Council. The second part of this study looks at the FACE organizational strategy to see how the sites implement the program. Specifically, we look at program management, staffing, and funding. We conclude by reflecting on the challenges of program execution, which, in this example, result from adapting a program concept to unique community circumstances.

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[1] The To'hajiilee Community School in Canoncito is referred to throughout the text as the Canoncito school; the Na'Neelzhiin Ji'Olta School in Torreon is referred to as the Torreon school.

Program Inception and Policy Context

The Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) is located within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the U.S. Department of the Interior. The OIEP provides K-12 educational programs for over 46,000 students in 185 schools on 63 different Indian reservations in 23 different states. The schools in Canoncito and Torreon receive all their basic funding from the BIA/OIEP. These schools also receive federal education funds such as Title VII Bilingual Education and Chapter 1. Although not state-supported, they are eligible to apply for school textbook funds. Because the BIA was concerned that, as early as the second grade, some Native American children were already falling behind in school, it initiated the FACE program.

After a review of the research on effective schools, interviews with early childhood education experts, and site visits across the country, William Mehojah and his staff at the BIA's Education Division became convinced that a program to encourage children's school success needed early intervention, parent involvement, and centralized training with local technical assistance. Mehojah negotiated with the Parents as Teachers and National Center for Family Literacy to design a joint program that would include these essential components. Mehojah and BIA Project Officer Patsy Jones explain why they decided to combine these two models:

> "When we put this together, we wanted a continuous birth to age five approach. But, since we don't have the facilities to offer center-based classrooms to children from birth to age three, so we knew this segment had to be offered a home-based option. This led to picking PAT and PACE in tandem."

In 1990 the BIA drafted guidelines for Requests for Applications. Nationwide, initial funding was competitive: only six sites were funded the first year. The Request stipulated that each site have at least one parent educator, one adult education teacher, one preschool teacher, and one preschool aide. (Parent educators provide family services through home visits; adult education teachers are center-based.) Programs had to meet several criteria: the school principal must attend FACE training, the school is to provide transportation and space for the preschool and family literacy programs, and parents must participate in developmental activities with their child. Finally, from the outset, the BIA established training contracts with each of the national sponsors and signed on an independent evaluator.

The Canoncito and Torreon schools both applied for the $200,000 funding. Space and staff emerged as two major issues. The principal of the Torreon school describes the process, problems, and success of his school's application:

> "I got together a group of people here at the school and we worked on the application. We presented it to the school board and the members were real excited about it. However, the program required a facility and we didn't have one. Our elementary school was completed in 1983 and we've been 50 students over capacity since we opened. We made an agreement with the Chapter [Navajo council] that we would run the program out of their building. The people in Washington liked our proposal but didn't

> feel comfortable about a facility that didn't belong to the U.S. government. I think they were concerned over liability issues. We had to struggle with issues of environmental health and safety and building code standards but in the end, Washington decided to approve our application."

Although there were problems associated with operating out of the Chapter House, the staff turned them into opportunities for team building and community outreach. The program, which shared one large common room with other Chapter functions, had to be "portable;" whenever the space was used for Chapter events, staff had to store program materials and equipment. Janitorial services were sporadic, and many times the staff had to clean up and prepare the room for the children's use. The FACE program coordinator, however, believes that the space constraints pulled the staff together:

> "Working over at the Chapter House forced us to work as a team. We had to learn the importance of each other's jobs and switch around for different situations. It put us in a situation where we had to work together, know what everybody was doing, and develop an appreciation for their jobs."

In addition, working out of the Chapter House meant the program was highly visible to the community. Staff explained the program to people who were coming in and out of the building, received positive feedback, and even gained a few new recruits.

Because of maintenance, operational, and liability concerns, the principal of the Torreon school and Patsy Jones, the BIA project officer, worked to secure funds to renovate the former Torreon elementary school building. As the principal says:

> "I have a very good feeling for all the people in the project because of their tenacity. The staff said, 'We're going to make it work, regardless of space issues,' and I think because of that attitude we were able to get the BIA to remove the asbestos in that building and have it redone."

In August 1993 FACE moved to its new quarters, a one-story adobe building three miles from the main school (children in the program are bussed to and from the main school for meals in the cafeteria). Community members, including oldtimers who had built the original structure and gone to school there, attended the dedication ceremony. A medicine man blessed the building with corn pollen, and the community feasted on chili and fry bread.

Like Torreon, the Canoncito school's program its share of challenges to overcome. Its grant proposal was turned down initially; however, when another school turned down its award, Canoncito was invited to enter the program. The late notification that it had received the grant limited the amount of time the school had to recruit staff for a scheduled PAT training in St. Louis, Missouri. Instead of a wide recruitment effort, two local teachers were hired for the FACE positions of parent educator and early childhood teacher. The Canoncito program is housed in two portable units situated behind the main school building.

Family and Community Needs

Canoncito, 34 miles west of Albuquerque, has a population of 1,600. Although the town is located relatively close to a big city, as much as 60 percent of the population are unemployed or underemployed. Many adults who try to find jobs in the city eventually find themselves going back to traditional occupations such as silversmithing or native American arts. Torreon, 105 miles north of

Albuquerque, is more remote and thinly settled; its isolation increases when rain and snow make the roads muddy and impassable. Prospects for economic development are bleak. Schools are the largest local employer, and jobs there are highly prized. As many as 60 people have applied for one cafeteria or custodial school opening. Families are frequently split when men go to work in Albuquerque or take seasonal jobs in neighboring states.

School personnel agree that poverty and lack of employment are major community issues. The average family income in Canoncito is $15,000 per year; in Torreon it is between $3,000 and $5,000 per year. Families depend on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, and the Women, Infant, and Child (WIC) nutrition program. FACE's family literacy emphasis is particularly relevant in Torreon, where local leaders estimate that fewer than 20 percent of the population have completed high school.[2] In Torreon 90 percent of the children entering kindergarten speak only Navajo, while in Canoncito more children come from bilingual or English-speaking homes.

School staffs share these observations on the effects of community and family conditions on children:

> "A day doesn't go by where I have to deal with some kind of issue involving a broken home, and it's usually linked to alcohol problems. It's really sad because it seems like something we can take care of. You hear of tribes in Canada that claim to be 95 percent alcohol free. It's a tough situation when you can't provide for your family and you can't do the things you'd like to do, and I guess alcohol's a way out. We have several alcohol related deaths every year. We feel, too, that there's lot of abuse in the area. We know a lot of kids get neglected, kids that are not getting enough sleep, kids that are not properly loved or supervised during the evenings."

At the same time school personnel recognize that the Native American extended family system is a source of strength in times of crisis and in caring for young children. Although poor, the families struggle to provide children with basic necessities and instill family interdependence. Family members routinely look after each other's children, a practice that is learned early in life:

> "What impressed me was how young children learn to take responsibilities for younger kids. I know when I was growing up I was the eldest and I didn't seem to have as much responsibility for my siblings as I see some of these young kids have."

> "I see the students from the early childhood program walking through the school. I see the bigger kids treating them with respect. The big kids take care of them and look after them."

Both communities have limited facilities and on-site social service resources. Telephones, running water, and transportation are in short supply. There is one small general store in each town, but no gas station. There are Head Start programs serving Canoncito and Torreon, but no other early childhood programs (and no programs for children under four). Indian Health Services operates clinics that offer preventive health care, including an efficient immunization program, but the clinic hours are limited. Emergency health care is problematic: there are no local hospitals, many families do not have telephones, and patients must be taken to Albuquerque or Crown Point.

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[2] Research and Training Associates, Inc. June 1993. Study of the BIA Family and Child Education Program. Report prepared for U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Education Programs. Page 95.

PROGRAM SERVICES

The FACE program is divided into home-based activities for children from birth to three-years-old and center-based activities for three- and four-year-olds. While the home-based program is open to all families, the center-based program's family literacy component is designed for parents who need to complete their secondary education or prepare for higher education or employment. The Canoncito and Torreon programs, each with a small staff that works together closely, run 11 months of the year.

Recruitment of Families

FACE community outreach consists of activities that recruit people into the program, invite continuing participation, and prepare families to leave the program as confident students and productive community members. As these communities are small, people know each other and local resident staff can easily identify potential participants as well as receive referrals from community members. The Canoncito and Torreon staffs have gone knocking on doors, explaining FACE to families, and have made community presentations. They have promoted the program to other service entities such as the Women, Infant and Child (WIC) food program, which has referred a number of pregnant women. As of December 1993, the programs had the following enrollment:

	Canoncito	**Torreon**
Home-based program	• 39 families/ 53 children	• 51 families/70 children
Center-based program	• 13 families/ 13 children	• 15 families/15 children

The staffs recruit families for the academic year during the summer months, but also continue throughout the year. Because there is ongoing pressure from the BIA to keep enrollment numbers up, a difficult task given the drop-out and turnover rates, one day a week during the school term is scheduled for recruitment and program planning.

Even though this program is offered at no cost, recruitment is a constant challenge for several reasons. One of the most important is the employment factor: parents who are working or looking for work often cannot make the commitment that FACE requires. This is especially true in the case of Canoncito, with the job potential in Albuquerque so close by. The search for employment dominates the lives of families -- sometimes they miss a scheduled home visit or adult education class and look for work instead.

The adult education piece of FACE's family literacy program has been the toughest to implement because it requires parents to commit significant time to center-based classes and parent/child preschool activities. The family literacy model FACE follows was originally designed in Kentucky for unemployed parents. The New Mexico programs, however, serves working parents and parents seeking employment. While some adults honestly want to learn, seasonal jobs and family responsibilities can make it impractical for them to enroll in classes with rigid hours of instruction. Others may have low self-esteem or serious personal problems that have to be addressed before they can begin to consider their education. Lack of child care and transportation can deter participation:

> "The difference between the home-based parents and the center-based parents is that the services are taken to the home-based parents. There is not that much difficulty with transportation or child care for those parents. But for the center-based parents, the two are very, very critical. A lot of our parents have young children but they don't have anybody to take care of them if they were to be in the center. The other problem is transportation. We originally said that our parents could go ahead and ride the school bus, but the parents felt embarrassed doing that and didn't take advantage of that opportunity."

Recruiting home visiting participants is challenging as well. Many families do not have telephones and a parent educator may have to make several visits before contact is finally made. Parent educators may also schedule appointments only to find parents have gone out to run errands. Weather also plays a role in Torreon, where the parent educators sometimes brave difficult road conditions to reach their families. Little or no help is available in these isolated areas when their truck gets stuck in the mud or their vehicle breaks down. The parent educators once had to wait until the school bus came by on its afternoon route. There is a cultural factor, too: the notion of home visiting is foreign to Native Americans:

> "For most Native American families, you don't go into their home very often. The place you will have contact with their kids will be in the school or some other setting."

At the same time, the Torreon staff describes some parents as too shy to come to the center. Other parents are embarrassed to admit their lack of a high school diploma, which coming to the center makes public. These parents prefer to have the parent education teacher come to their homes for tutoring.

Retention in FACE has been a frustrating issue for the staff members. There are inactive families who "drop in and drop out" of the program; occasionally there are long lapses in their involvement. Retaining participants in the adult literacy program can be as difficult as the initial recruitment, again due to economic influences. Whenever parents find temporary employment, they stop attending classes. In Torreon, attendance is high at the start of the school year but then drops off when families go to Colorado to harvest potatoes. Fortunately, program staffs have also felt supported and encouraged by the BIA coordinator in Washington who encourages them not to give up and to keep going back.

Although the FACE recruiters know that "the numbers are out there," it takes time to gain family participation. Some of the most difficult families to recruit and retain are court-ordered referrals, that is, parents who are required to participate in a home visiting program in order to keep their children home instead of in foster care, or parents with substance abuse problems. Staff members believe these parents and children are in greatest need of the program, but they have not been as successful in recruiting them. And if they do bring them into the program, keeping them active long enough so that they actually benefit is difficult. Recognizing that the neediest families are often those most difficult to reach, one parent educator talks about the balancing act she has to perform:

> "You have to be real careful with how far you can go because they can just walk away from the program. You just kind of have to go along, not really push on them the requirements, and make sure that they don't turn away."

Home-based Services

FACE's home visiting component was developed by Parents as Teachers (PAT) and offers lessons for parenting skills, developmental activities for children, and periodic child development screening. The PAT concept has been well-received by parents; the program has expanded to serve three- to five-year-old children who already have younger siblings enrolled in the program. PAT developed a curriculum specifically for these older children. The parent educators are available to families before the birth of a child and offer continuing support over a lengthy period of time. Parents appear to like their parent educators and welcome visits as often as once a week, an important modification to the original Missouri model which offers monthly home visits.

The PAT curriculum is flexible enough so that parent educators can implement it in a way suitable to the Navajo. The Torreon FACE program coordinator, makes the distinction between learning by demonstration and by experimentation, the former being characteristic of the Navajo. She explains:

> "A lot of Navajo children's learning traditionally involves sitting back and watching until a child feels comfortable enough to try out something and not fail. It's a demonstration type of learning, different from the white way of 'get out there and do it and if you make mistakes, you learn from them.' A parent educator understands that it's hard for the parent to get down and play with the child or get involved with an activity, and we don't push it. Instead, I notice that a parent educator will do a kind of parallel play with a child, beginning something in one corner and then waiting for the child to imitate her. When I get to do home visits I don't have a lot of success with certain parents, getting them involved with an activity. I just do the activity and talk to the parent at the same time. Then the next week when I go back the parent tells me, 'We did this and I noticed she was using her thumb and her finger.' So I know that the parent did the activity later, not while I was there, which is okay."

FACE also supports different styles of home visiting, typified by the following two examples (one is initiated by the child, the second by the parent educator):

> Two parent educators spend 35 minutes with a two-year old girl and her mother. The television is showing Barney, the child's favorite show, but the child's attention focuses on the brightly colored cardboard blocks brought by the visitors. These blocks are used to help develop the child's large motor skills. One parent educator chats with the child's mother, encouraging her to read to her child and also offering help in filling out her Financial Aid Form to attend community college. The parent educator then turns to the child, tries to get the child to talk to her but the child does not respond. The mother tells the parent educator that her daughter talks and knows a number of words. The child piles the blocks vertically; as the pile grows taller the blocks come tumbling down and she tries again. Her mother gives her more blocks and helps her stack them. The second parent educator begins to lay out the blocks horizontally across the floor and the child soon imitates her. When the child is unable to reach a block that she needs she calls out, "Mama," the only time she speaks during the session. When the visitors prepare to leave they begin to put the blocks into two plastic crates; the child helps them and both her mother and one parent educator show her how to arrange them properly to fit in the crate.

> A single parent educator interacts with two parents who are sisters, one with a baby girl sleeping in a cradle board and the other with a male toddler. The mothers sit on the couch while the parent educator sits on the floor and interacts with the toddler. A large television stays on throughout the session. First, talking to the mother of the infant, the parent educator asks about her husband's job and whether the baby had her first laugh, a significant event in Navajo culture. She gives her a handout which describes the characteristics of infants from six-weeks to three-months old. She also mentions to both mothers an upcoming group meeting, asking if they are coming and if they can bring some refreshments. The parent educator then brings out some soft cloth blocks in different shapes and stacks several on top of each other. The toddler blows on the pile and then knocks it down. The boy's mother joins him on the floor and plays with the blocks. Before leaving the household the parent educator asks the women if they would like to help with a fundraising activity and sell refreshments at the high school basketball game. She schedules her next visit and, as she hands out another sheet on the characteristics of three-year-old children, asks the boy's mother what words he is saying.

Parent educators also use home visiting time to administer standardized screening tests. The tests present some problems, especially for the Torreon parent educators. They use the Denver Two Screening, which they translate into Navajo -- a frustrating task since English labels objects while Navajo describes the action of an object. Also, some of the test questions simply are not relevant to the culture.

Family Literacy and Adult Education

FACE's family literacy model was developed by the National Center for Family Literacy and includes four elements: adult education, parent time, early childhood education and Parent and Child Time (PACT). The model offers these activities in conjunction with preschool for three- and four-year-old children three times a week and calls for the following scenario:

> Parent and child go to school together for a six-hour period from morning to early afternoon. The participants enter separate classrooms but reunite for Parent and Child Together (PACT), in which parents read and play with their children. Parents lunch with their children and then prepare them for their nap. While the children rest, parents go to their own classroom and review the activities they did with their children. The adult education teacher guides their discussion to bring out child growth and development issues and may also present a specific parenting subject to go over that day. The remainder of the afternoon might be spent making games for the children or continuing their adult education work.

The small number of enrolled adults and fluctuations in attendance rates pose a challenge to the adult education teachers. Teachers try to design group learning activities for the parents, but having too few students at any one time makes cooperative exercises difficult to plan:

> "We're urged [by consultants] to use cooperative learning, but it's a mental block for me. If I plan a cooperative activity for ten people, how would I change it if fewer showed up?"

Therefore adult education classes are conducted mainly as individualized instruction taught in English. Teachers assess the individual's level of literacy and target the skills that need to be strengthened. Parents use a computer, read books, and do individual assignments tailored to their academic needs. If a student is ready for the GED, the teacher will give practice tests and provide exercises to increase proficiency in specific areas.

In the course of adult education activities, teachers also try to weave in other educational agendas such as cultural appreciation, parent education, and life skills training. For example, one teacher might read a Native American story to parents as part of a comprehension exercise, but will then mention the importance of reading to children. Or a teacher might help students prepare income tax returns as part of the lesson plan.

The link between the child-focused and adult-focused activities occurs during PACT, in which parents read and play with their children. The following scene is typical of PACT time:

> Parents sit on the floor and help their children with blocks and trucks; parents help children try out musical instruments. The preschool teacher chats informally with some parents, describing what their children did that morning. While parents and children have a free hand in deciding what to do during the first part of PACT, this is followed by a more structured read aloud activity controlled by the teacher and her assistant. The teachers engage the children by asking them to point to characters in an oversized book as they take turns narrating first an English and then a Navajo story.

In addition to adult education and PACT, a third distinct activity is parent time. During parent time, the adult education teacher sets aside time specifically to discuss parenting issues or involve parents in making learning toys that they can take home. In Canoncito, staff members rotate in presenting child development information during group meetings. In Torreon, parent time is also used as a fundraising event once a month. Parents make blankets and other crafts that they can sell during school events. Teachers also integrate parenting information and skills into the adult education curriculum. For instance, in both sites, adult teachers routinely impart information about the importance of reading to children or children's nutrition in the course of the day's class.

While Torreon's FACE program has been able to adhere to the family literacy model, the Canoncito program has made substantial changes to accommodate working parents:

- While the priority is to engage the maximum participation of parents, a range of involvement is acceptable. Parents who do not join the adult education component are asked to come for PACT time, scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Extended family members can take the place of a busy parent for PACT time on occasion.

- Parents are asked to participate at weekly parent sessions held in the evening. Instead of going to preschool during the day, these children come with their parents in the evening for their respective classes and PACT time, and the staff provides child care for other siblings.

- As a last resort, the staff and parent advisory council implement sanctions for parents who continue to fail to show up. One year parents who missed PACT time twice without an excuse were fined $5; if they missed four times they were suspended. In 1993-94, if neither parent nor relative showed up for PACT, the family unit was not allowed to come to class the following school day.

Although the home-based and center-based components began as separate models, the programs have tried to integrate services over time so that they function as a whole. Recruitment is a joint activity: parent educators refer families to center-based activities, and the preschool teachers refer families to the home visiting program. Staff members are responsible for conducting parent group sessions, a duty that is rotated between staff of both programs. In Canoncito, one parent educator and the adult education teacher organize the monthly group meetings that involve families from both home- and center-based components. In Torreon, the home-based families visit the center one day a week for parent time, PACT, and adult education classes. The adult education teacher also plans to do home visits with the parent educators to ease parents into the center-based adult education program. Thus the integration of home- and center-based components provides families with a continuum of educational activities.

Classroom-Based Early Childhood Services

FACE's preschool component provides children a rich, stimulating environment. The quality of social interaction in the classroom is one that encourages children to feel comfortable in a school setting and cooperate with teachers and peers. Children receive positive reinforcement from their teachers, who report that the children like going to school and feel validated by their learning activities. Classrooms at both sites are divided into areas for art, reading, blocks and toys, and small group activity. The rooms offer a variety of learning materials, from buttons and zippers to catalog-ordered toys. A typical preschool schedule in Torreon looks like this:

Morning	
7:30	Breakfast in the school cafeteria
8:15	Arrive in classroom
8:20	Open work time, following the High/Scope plan, do and review
10:00	Clean up time
10:15	Small group activity
10:35	Plan for PACT
10:40	PACT
11:00	Clean up time
11:10	Circle time with parents
11:20	Lunch
Afternoon	
12:00	Return to classroom, brush teeth
12:15	Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) with parents
12:40	Nap time
2:00	Departure

Parents as well as community members support the preschool, which provides a much needed service in towns with limited choices for early childhood care and education. In addition, the use of Navajo language and culture in the classroom, has strengthened children's as well as their parents' appreciation of their heritage. A day in the Canoncito preschool might be as follows:

> The main classroom space has a large open area with a colorful rug used for circle time and separate interest areas typical of early childhood environments. The walls are decorated with items such as a chart of children's assigned partner for a Christmas gift exchange, a recipe for Navajo fry bread, and a clan tree with pictures of students,

> grouping children according to the two Navaho clans to which they belong. Many of the signs and materials in the room are in both Navajo and English.
>
> The day begins at 8:30 a.m. with children writing their names on large newsprint sheets. As typical of three- and four-year-olds, most of the children scribble, some use a few correct and legible letters, and some do a perfect job. While this goes on, the teacher chats with her students: "Did you get new shoes? Those are nice! Are those your dancing shoes?" After the children sign in, the teacher leads the group in a series of motions as she says, "If you're ready, let's see your hands up, clap your hands, snap your fingers, touch your nose, touch your mouth and zip up." She then counts the boys aloud, the children repeating the numbers in English. "Who knows how to write 'six'? Who can help me?" She writes a large "6" on a newsprint page, her guided by a few children. She asks, "Are there more boys or more girls today?" "More boys," chimes the group. "Are there less boys or less girls?" "Less girls," they reply.
>
> The next activity is news of the day. A child relays the facts that his family's cow ran away, they sold a black mother cow and a baby cow for $20, and his grandfather has a "busting" horse and he has an Appaloosa horse. The teacher records these and other events. Later she returns to the news and asks children: "I see two words that say cow. Who can find them? They begin with 'c'. Can you circle it?" Then the group reads the story together, finishing up with questions on punctuation: "Who remembers what these marks mean?" As the children correctly point out quotation marks and periods, the teacher shares her enthusiasm:"Give me five!... I think you guys must be in college!"
>
> The teacher sets up a song and dance routine next, putting on a record with which the children are clearly familiar. Well-coordinated clapping, shaking, and hopping begins. She asks, "Which direction is east?" and directs the children's attention to signs written in Navajo posted on each of the room's four walls. As the children turn and point to the correct sign she asks, "What does that mean in Navajo?" and elicits the response, "The sun's rising up." After another spirited song, dance, and chasing game, the students break into small groups for activities. One group sits with a university intern and works on Christmas tree ornaments. Others may read books, play in the kitchen or block area, paint, listen to stories on tape while following along in the book, or ride a tricycle.
>
> At 10:00 a.m. the teacher rings a bell to begin a cleanup period. Children gradually shift from work and play to putting things away. The teacher says, "We need to have recall time," and the children are asked what they did during free choice time.

In Canoncito, the more acculturated community, the teachers have made an exceptional effort to weave Navajo language and culture into the classroom setting and the structure of the school day. The teachers address the children as "sister" and "brother," creating a feeling of endearment and kinship, and reinforce awareness of clan membership. Special events during the school year celebrate Navajo culture. The harvest festival is observed with children eating corn on the cob steamed overnight in a pit. Their field trips include visiting a farm where children can pet goats and feed the young from bottles. The children's graduation ceremony is a time for feasting: a sheep is butchered and the mothers grilled "twisters", made from the intestines.

The cultural innovations grew out of the personal convictions and classroom experiences of the staff, as well as FACE program requirements. The teacher and co-teacher both belong to minority populations and share the belief in sustaining a strong cultural identity in a pluralistic society. Canoncito's preschool teacher, of Filipino and Chinese origin, talks about the growth of cultural awareness:

> "We were seeing kids coming to us, saying, 'Teacher, there is an Indian over there.' And I would say, 'But you're Indian, too.' 'Well, teacher, I don't like Indians.' Those comments hurt us and bothered us. We saw that we needed a cultural piece so that these children would know who they are, and begin to feel pride in who they are as Native Americans. I want my children to feel proud of who they are so that down the road, with their self-esteem established, they don't have to look into things like substance abuse. The children need to know where they come from in order to know where they are going."

Canoncito parents and school board members have approved and support introducing elements of Navajo in the preschool. The president of the school board shares her views:

> "I went to boarding school and everything was the white man's way. That was wrong. Leaving our culture out was not the right thing to do. A lot of people in our community see the value of FACE, furthering the education of the young adults and bringing the kids, too. FACE also deals with our culture. FACE starts with a prayer. In our culture, before the sun rises, you take corn pollen collected at harvest and put it in your mouth and head and pray to the Great Spirit. It helps me spiritually. It's a good thing for the kids to learn. The kids also learn the Navajo numbers and colors, and most of all, their clan. It's very important to learn who your clan relatives are. Everywhere you go and greet others, you exchange clan names and show respect."

The Torreon program faces a different set of circumstances, however, in its attempt to instill a cultural identity into the preschool: it struggles with the bilingual issue. The program coordinator believes that the Navajo language should predominate, but many parents who had a hard time learning English want their children to start learning it as early as possible. The coordinator's rationale is as follows:

> "I want the children to get a good base of Navajo -- at three and four the children are still developing their language -- but many parents want them exposed to English. Last year, when I was doing home visiting, I'd ask parents, 'Which home visitor do you want?' and they'd say, 'Can you come? I want my children to learn some English.' You don't want them to lose their home language and research is showing that you first get that good base in the home and then transitioning to English is somewhat easier. We struggle with it. It's a dilemma."

To provide continuity to the children's learning experiences, the High/Scope curriculum is implemented in grades K-3. The FACE program subsidizes teacher training in the curriculum, although the school may provide supplementary funds to increase the number of trainees. Implementation of the curriculum varies within and between schools, and there is minimal integration between FACE and the K-3 program.[3] There are few meetings between FACE teachers and school teachers throughout the year, except for transition activities. In the spring, for example, Torreon FACE teachers take the children and their parents to the kindergarten classrooms the children will be in the next fall. They also go over the children's records with the kindergarten teachers.

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[3] Research and Training Associates, Inc. November 1993. Study of the BIA Family and Child Education Program. Report prepared for U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Education Programs. Pages 25-26.

The Parent Advisory Council

The FACE program has a parent advisory council to advise staff on program issues and suggest new activities. In Canoncito all parents are members of this council and they elect their officers. When a Canoncito school board member requested exempting his working son from attending PACT time, the preschool teacher asked him to bring it before the parent advisory council. At its meeting the parents defended the guidelines and felt that if they changed them for one person, the rules would have to change for all. Instead, they agreed to encourage extended family members to come in for PACT time. This decision was consonant with central office guidelines that allow each site to include extended family members in program activities.

The parent advisory council also voices concerns about the program. In Torreon, when the program was still operating out of the Chapter House, clients who had appointments at the clinic located in the same facility would leave their children in the preschool program. Program parents felt this was unfair to the staff members, who were not a babysitting service. They came up with a policy that if clients were going to be gone longer than five minutes they would have to take their children to the clinic with them.

Participant Opinions and Outcomes

The FACE program has been formally evaluated, and early findings suggest that traditional indicators of success (numbers of participants who complete their GED, high school, or find employment) fail to capture the broad spectrum of impacts on participants and the spillover effects on other family members and the community. In 1992 and 1993, 30 FACE parents earned their GEDs or received high school diplomas.[4] It is important to note that Torreon has a significantly higher GED completion rate than Canoncito. The difference in achievement relates directly to geography. In Torreon, there are periods when the town is isolated due to weather conditions or when men are working at distant locations and the women left at home partake in the program. On the other hand, because Canoncito is so close to Albuquerque, parents are more likely to work or be looking for work and have less time to participate in adult education classes.

Although the number of participants in Canoncito and Torreon who completed the GED or received a high school diploma is modest, active participants from all FACE sites believe that they have improved their parenting skills -- and consider this the most beneficial program result. Other important changes include an increase in parents' self-worth and confidence, as well as an increased awareness of the importance of education for both parents and children.[5]

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[4] Research and Training Associates, Inc. June and November 1993. Study of the BIA Family and Child Education Program. Report Prepared for U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Education Programs. Pages 18-19 and 78, respectively.

[5] Ibid. Pages 77-80.

As for the children, the Child Observation Record (COR), an instrument that assesses the children's developmental progress, reports improved scores over time. Furthermore, positive effects spread to other family members who learn about parenting skills and to community members whose participation in FACE events fosters cultural pride and the use of native languages.

Reinforcing the results of the formal evaluation, FACE staff mention seeing concrete progress achieved by parents and children over the past three years. Staff talk about the children's progress in terms of verbalizing more in English and Navajo. The children are described as being independent and confident:

> "The children are slow at first to open up, but when they see you at the store, they recognize you and become real excited. They'll say, 'Here comes my teacher, there's my teacher!'"

The children look forward to their classes, too:

> "Some parents have asked us, 'Can you tell my child there is no school on Wednesday? Because she'll say 'I have school' and when I say 'No,' she'll throw a fit!' Some of the parents even have to come here on weekends to show that the school is closed, so that's how we know we're doing something real good here, that the kids want to come to school."

The FACE children have also earned a good reputation: kindergarten teachers look forward to working with these children. The children readily adjust to the kindergarten classroom. Due to their preschool experience, the children are familiar with the cafeteria, library and other rooms, and being with students. The Canoncito assistant principal observes that FACE children are not afraid of school and have developed a sense of belonging and feel comfortable. Likewise, in Torreon the children are at ease in the main school, where they are bussed for lunch, and spend time playing in the gym. Even the home-based children and their parents are exposed to the school regularly, going there once a week for their group meetings.

The staffs at Canoncito and Torreon believe that their work has had a significant impact on families. Home visitors believe there has been a lot of family growth -- referring to parents' increased knowledge and interest in their children's development, greater self-confidence, and willing participation in the program's activities:

> "There has been a lot of growth in all the families. You can see the changes. Ever since we worked with them you see the change anywhere from recognizing their child's development to participating in meetings and improving their self-esteem."

> "I think as time has gone on, we have more and more people sticking with our program, especially the transitional part of the three-year-olds coming into our center program. I have heard parents say, 'I hope when my child gets bigger you will still be around."

Teachers are pleased to receive reports from parents that they read to their children and use alternative discipline techniques. Among young parents they notice greater maturity.

Parents have also become more involved and outspoken in school-wide meetings. In Canoncito the FACE group meetings draw more parents than the school PTA. The FACE parents in Torreon participate in K-12 fundraising, volunteer in the classrooms, and have joined a committee to revise the student handbook. In the Title VII program for fifth to eight graders, 14 of the 16 parents that joined a parent training session were FACE parents. FACE staff see the effect the program has had on parent involvement in the program and the community:

> "Our parents started coming to the classroom. They had rarely advocated for bilingual education before but now they tell us that they like what we do and that they want it to continue."
>
> "The parents have started telling us how they felt we should change the [FACE] program. To be honest with you we made a lot of changes based on their suggestions."
>
> "We have seen parents being active in school and community groups. One of our first group of graduates, a very poised individual, was a chair and treasurer of our parents group and became a leader in the PTA. He is very involved in community projects and spent the whole year volunteering with the emergency medical service. He also continues to visit with our children and volunteers in classrooms at school."
>
> "Our FACE parents are interested in what happens to their kids. They're the ones that, if there's something wrong at the school, will be there at the school board meeting, raising questions. They're not going to let things slide by."

Parents themselves confirm the observations of the staff, citing the benefits of program participation on their relations with their children:

> "As a father I have a lot more involvement with my kids. All I can say is I wish I had started with my first one; she is nine now."
>
> "To meet the cost of living usually both father and mother are working. The parenting time gives me ideas how we can cope with the stress (of working and childrearing) and what we can do at home. It's not just sticking your child in front of the TV."
>
> "I've learned that it's not just play. They're playing but it's learning, too."

* * *

FACE began as a program with two separate components, home-based and center-based, that needed integration at the site level. This integration has evolved so that home-based families share common parenting and educational activities with the center-based families at the schools; it is less frequently reported that center-based activities are brought to the homes of participating families. Because the program is evolving and adapting to community needs, it is quite possible that further blending will occur in the future.

In adapting the PAT and family literacy models, FACE offers continuous, complementary services delivered in a neat package. However, implementing a two-generational model is challenging. Delivering services for children has been a relatively smooth operation, but trying to match program services with adult interests and needs has been problematic. The staff spends considerable time recruiting families and maintaining their commitment to the program, especially for the family literacy component. Many parents are working or have family obligations that conflict with potential and ongoing participation. Making FACE a more attractive program will require partnerships that connect adults to potential employers, in all likelihood, in Albuquerque and Crown Point. The motivation for enrolling and working hard in adult education will be stronger if those who attend have job prospects.

The self-contained nature of the FACE program -- offering a discrete set of educational services by paraprofessionals -- also limits the levels of support it can provide for highly stressed families. Staff members, especially parent educators, have developed intimate relations with families but are not trained to respond to more severe family needs. Helping FACE projects respond to needy families will require close communication with available health and social services within the BIA fold and the local community. Accordingly, the BIA is looking into strengthening collaboration amoung its schools, social service and health service agencies. FACE staff members also contend with difficult dilemmas in their work. For example, parent educators are sometimes caught between respecting family privacy and protecting the rights of children. They see their role as supporting families, and it is painful when they have to report parental neglect.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

Program Management

Implementing a multisite program requires navigating between centralized supervision and local flexibility. The BIA administers FACE: its strategy for program governance has been to provide the policy guidelines regarding space, staffing requirements, curriculum models, and procurement procedures for the grant-funded program. It contracts with two national organizations for training and technical assistance, the Parents as Teachers National Center and the National Center for Family Literacy. An external evaluation provides information on services and outcomes for children and parents. School principals act as supervisors of the sites but give staff autonomy in planning and implementation within the framework of the national models. Local sites hire and oversee staff, allocate their budgets, and design and manage their own recruitment, class scheduling, and program activities. Compared to other BIA programs, the local school administrators agree that FACE is designed to provide strong support to individual sites. The principal of the Torreon school comments:

> "I think there were a lot of people involved with FACE that weren't going to let it fail."

Most of the FACE personnel went through an initial week-long training session conducted by the Parents as Teachers National Center and the National Center for Family Literacy -- it was the first time these organizations had ever delivered joint training. The initial training segregated home visiting and family literacy staff; cross-training has since occurred. Now Parents as Teachers National Center and the National Center for Family Literacy consultants visit the programs twice a year. Each organization works with a consulting staff of five to six people, and each of the FACE staff members benefits from one-on-one observation, detailed feedback, and coaching.

Overall, the local staffs regard the assistance provided by the consultants highly and commend the constructive tone of their evaluations. The consultants help the staff think through program issues and provide recommendations for improvement. Along with the technical assistance from the national model disseminators, staffs attend a summer implementation conference and optional fall or spring national meeting, events which allow all the sites to come together and learn from each other. The BIA project officer also visits and communicates often, actively monitoring and cheering them on.

While training and technical assistance tend to homogenize the programs, community conditions spur adaptation and innovation. The sites reflect the local leadership that has led to new arrangements such as weaving Navajo culture and language into the curriculum, increasing the number of home visits, and developing amenable standards for working parents. Foremost, school principals, who themselves undergo training with their staff, have developed a sense of ownership in the program and support their staff's decisions. They trust their staff members and give them a good amount of autonomy in planning and implementing the program.

The program relies on a small staff who must work together closely and easily. Each FACE site has a staff composed of two to three parent educators, one early childhood teacher, one classroom aide, and one adult education teacher. In both sites the early childhood teacher also functions as coordinator of day to day operations. The coordinator prepares data for reports, disseminates information to staff, works with external evaluators, coordinates visitors, prepares monthly reports for the BIA, and oversees recruitment. She gives input in budget preparation and participates in staff evaluations with the principal. Through weekly meetings the coordinator and staff plan activities, delegate duties, and hear feedback from each other about perceptions from the community or other school personnel about FACE. Using the formal evaluation as one of several tools to guide program development, they also discuss ways to improve program responsiveness to participants. Decision making is a shared activity.

Staffing and Training

When the Canoncito and Torreon principals first announced the FACE openings, interested teachers applied for the positions; most of the programs' preschool and adult education teachers were former school district employees. While teachers are classified as professional staff, parent educators are paraprofessionals. The parent educators have mixed backgrounds. Before joining FACE, one was working in a clerical job in the school, another was a school teacher, and one was a mother who happened to see a job posting at a general store. Staff members are paid on the basis of the regular salary schedule for the school system.

A good fit exists between the FACE staff and the communities served. The parent educators are Navajo residents who know many of the families and relate to them with empathy and respect. In Torreon, where a substantial number of program participants are teenage or young mothers, the parent educators, who are young mothers themselves, serve as role models. They strongly encourage mothers to remain in high school or to go back to school. Although the early childhood teachers and adult education teachers are not Navajo they have spent several years working in the community. One Navajo classroom co-teacher in Canoncito highly regards the effort her non-Navajo colleagues make to be culturally sensitive:

> "They have the heart to learn and appreciate our culture. It makes me feel good that they can understand our Navajo people."

Thus one of the greatest assets of FACE lies in its staff members, who are strongly committed to their work. They have internalized the program's goals relating to community needs and reinterpreted them in the light of personal experiences. One staff member, who herself had a child while in high school, says,

> "My goal is to encourage the parents to get their education, and just to be there for them, to encourage them to go back to school. It's never too late to go back to school. I'd like to see people in this community looking for jobs and supporting their own families, and bringing what they have learned back here to the community."

The staff members talk about the importance of cementing the bond between parent and child at an early age and building harmony within the family. They believe in empowering families, with a basic goal in mind:

> "To have parents make decisions and feel that through their actions and efforts they can change the conditions in which they live."

They seek to build self-esteem among parents and children and strengthen pride in their cultural identity. Parents appreciate the respectful attitude of staff:

> "[The staff] come down to where we stand."

> "They listen to our questions and concerns."

> "It's almost like family by the time your kid graduates."

The commitment to families manifests itself in the extra mile staff go to serve them, as well as in their persistent outreach efforts. The parent educators in Torreon, for example, hauled wood and water for a family:

> "This mom's house was cold and she had kids and a baby. We brought her a truckload of wood, which we ourselves chopped and left on her yard."

The Canoncito early childhood teacher believes that the program has progressed to where it is today because of the attitudes and resiliency of staff:

> "Even when things look bleak and horrible and you just want to cry, you don't give up. You need to be flexible, and then for people that are not Native American, they have to accept the culture and want to be a part of it."

The demands of the family literacy component and the reality of the implementation environment exert pressure on the staffs. They work hard throughout the year to encourage parents to sign up for the program and then live up to their commitment. They also live under the shadow of the BIA's scrutiny and the need to keep enrollment and attendance at reasonable levels based on the costs of the program. The standards of family literacy are exacting, even when modified locally, with a high level of parental involvement required. When parents are unable to meet program expectations the situation lends itself to staff frustration.

Fortunately, staff meetings and planning times allow FACE personnel to stand back and gain a clearer perspective of what the program is achieving. Staff relations are collegial, and in both sites, staff members have learned to function as teams. Within the preschool, teacher and assistant complement each other's work, and the warm relationship they have for each other permeates the classroom setting.

When it comes to tying together the different program components, the coordinator plays a key role in getting everyone to plan as a group and rely on each other for support. Weekly team meetings allow the staff members to inform others of their work, air their grievances, and get feedback from their peers. They are the time to sort out mundane duties such as who will be the last person to leave the building or take out the garbage. They are also a the time for collective brainstorming on how to resolve problems and improve services.

Being a small group, staff members are able to take responsibility for events, such as group meetings. This allows every individual to have the opportunity to exercise leadership and delegate tasks among group members:

> "We have a planning sheet. For the group meeting tonight one home visitor is in charge of the event. She was in charge of signing up people -- like I'm responsible for the sandwiches and someone else for the cleanup. We all have our own duties and everybody takes a turn."

This strategy has worked well in both sites, allowing staff members to feel empowered and to develop ownership for the program as a whole, not just for his or her assigned component:

> "I thought early on, like for parent time, that each staff member would have to take some responsibility, so everybody kind of shared the weight [of responsibility] and also, it kept the home-based in touch in with the center-based... We've shared the whole, it's not just separate pieces. We've all tried to work as a staff."

Together the FACE personnel succeed in achieving teamwork in order to integrate the different program components and have a functioning whole.

Funding

FACE is a relatively small operation in terms of its staffing and number of participants. It has basically one funding source and continuation grants are assured, based on adequate appropriations from Congress each year and compliance with program guidelines. Whereas other early childhood programs may have a full-time director to manage different funding streams, FACE has a part-time funding coordinator who also teaches in the program. This arrangement is feasible because the focus of activities is on recruitment and service delivery rather than on grant proposal writing and expansion.

Each FACE program can apply for up to $200,000 per year for operating expenses. (In 1994-95 the amount increased to $225,000). Training funds, evaluation and oversight are allocated from the central office, bringing each site's costs to approximately $285,000. The Torreon school has raised additional funds through a Title VII special populations grant. That grant, amounting to $137,755 in 1993-94, pays for FACE home visiting services to an additional 22 three- to five-year- old children who do not attend the center-based program.

The bulk of the BIA funds pay staff salaries. It is getting harder for both sites to operate because staff salaries follow the pay scale of Department of Defense teachers, which is high to start to minimize personnel turnover and increases at an estimated rate of 6 percent annually. The BIA grant money also covers equipment and materials, as well as travel expenses for training. The BIA stipulates that the schools must provide space and transportation.

A major concern of the FACE staff members is the procurement process, which they describe as "cumbersome" and a "pain." All requests for supplies and materials must go through the BIA system and the process is slow. Two years ago the Canoncito program ordered and obligated funds for two computers that have not yet been delivered. In addition, requisitions must be placed yearly at scheduled times.

The staffs find this system frustrating because not all needs can be anticipated in advance. The number of adults who will take the GED test, which requires a fee, cannot be predicted beforehand. To go through the procurement process entails not only specifying the number of applicants but also providing their social security numbers. Sometimes, family events such potluck suppers or field trips and ideas for parent time arise spontaneously. Without a discretionary fund, the staff members pay for food and materials from their own pockets. Part of the parent time activity involves parents making blankets and craft items for sale in bazaars. Parents' fundraising brings in about $2,000 a year.

* * *

FACE demonstrates that using centralized training combined with local autonomy is an effective strategy. Moreover, the local sites have the backing of the school principals -- who have themselves been trained in and understand the program's models. The FACE program also benefits from a sponsor who provides adequate resources; the sites do not have to agonize over the grant process and receive a wealth of training and technical assistance.

Another key to program success is hiring competent and committed staff: individual staff members define the program. They are competent, committed and, presumably, driven and independent given their relative isolation and small numbers. They also have positive working relationships with each other.

The formal evaluation has provided valuable information to the sites in terms of their progress in implementing the program, overcoming challenges, meeting program objectives, understanding the participant population, and identifying outcomes and accomplishments. This information can be used as the basis for strategic planning and program development, as well as improved training and technical assistance for the sites.

CONCLUSION

FACE epitomizes the challenges and successes likely to emerge wherever local programs seek to fit new educational practices to community conditions. The FACE program suggests that the tension between a model and its application is dynamic. Practice sets the problem identification and problem solving processes in motion, providing model developers and practitioners the opportunity to refine a program's features and enhance its effectiveness in specific cultural settings.

The New Mexican FACE sites operate in very remote and isolated towns, and it is to the credit of the local staff and administrators that they have dealt with the adult education component with flexibility; for that has engendered positive feelings on the parents' part. Understanding that the logistics of simply being able to take advantage of the program are sometimes insurmountable and that employment needs dictate attendance patterns is an important realization.

While FACE has started to fill the void of programs oriented toward young children in Canoncito and Torreon, implementing a two-generational program will continue to challenge these local sites and provide the opportunity for creative solutions. While a small community means everyone can participate in school activities and events, lack of proximate health, mental health, employment, and substance abuse support makes collaboration difficult. FACE is trying to alter the reality of limited services for families living in an area of limited economic development.

In general, both the home-based and classroom-based services have been successful, strengthening the quality of parent-child interaction. Parent involvement in FACE has set an important precedent for the schools in their relationship with families. But if the program wants to build bridges between family, school, and community, it must incorporate other social services. However, FACE staff works to improve families' self-esteem and pride in their cultural identity, a very important first step in helping people become independent and self-sufficient. Only after achieving this can families begin contribute to and support others in their community.